

NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES: VOICES OF STUDENTS IN A COMMUNITY
COLLEGE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

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Negotiating Identities: Voices of Community College Students in a Developmental Education Program

Thesis directed by Dr. Mark A. Clarke

ABSTRACT

More than half of the students who enroll in community colleges leave after one year without completing degrees or certificates. Framing the problem of low persistence rates as one of identity development rather than skills development, this study examines the perceptions of first-semester students in two developmental reading and writing learning communities at an urban community college that serves a diverse student population. The researcher conducted interviews with students and teachers at the beginning and end of the semester, observed class sessions, and analyzed student writing. Three-quarters of the students in the study were recent high school graduates and more than half of them immigrated to the U.S. with their families, most of them while they were still in elementary or secondary school. Almost 80% of the students were bilingual. Emerging from the data is evidence of students' negotiations of their identities as college students. The study describes the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, evidence of their beliefs in practice, and the classroom environments the teachers and students create. Using a theoretical framework based on constructive developmental psychology and sociocultural learning theory, the researcher documents connections between shifts in students' perceptions of themselves as college students and the activities they engage in during their first semester at college. Contributing to students' emerging identities as college students are changes in their ideas about reading, writing, career and education goals, grades and learning, and relationships with peers and family. The study contributes to an understanding of connections between learning and identity development and has

implications for classroom practice in first-year courses, design of developmental education programs, and professional development of community college faculty.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate's thesis. I recommend its publication.

Signed

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Mark A. Clarke.

Mark A. Clarke

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to community college students, who seek better lives for themselves and their families, and to community college educators, whose everyday efforts make a difference in the lives of students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many people contributed to the successful completion of this study, and I want to thank some of them here. My gratitude goes first to the students who contributed their time and stories and the teachers who opened their classrooms to me. The long conversations with my adviser, Mark Clarke, in coffee shops around the city and his careful reading of many drafts contributed to the shape and substance of this manuscript. Elaine Baker encouraged me and provided a sounding board for my ideas. The study grew from our work together. My husband, Manfred Brancard, provided the support at home that allowed me to focus on the study. Thank you all very much.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Armando was the self-described class clown in high school, marking his academic success as getting at least a D and accumulating enough credits to graduate with the rest of his class, an accomplishment that ran counter to the expectations of many of his friends, teachers, and family. Confounding the expectations of others once again, he had decided to come to college. "I would like everybody to notice me. Notice me," Armando said at the beginning of his first semester at community college. He explained:

I believe getting an education, like I said, it will get people to notice me. And my whole family just to really take me serious and not take me that I'm all a big joke, that I really want to do something.

Laurence came to community college with a much different high school experience behind him than Armando had. Active in sports, student government, yearbook, and a student service club, he had distinguished himself as a leader at his high school. He was a bit embarrassed that he had tested into developmental courses at the community college and would have preferred to attend a private business school, which was too expensive for his family. Laurence described himself as "confused" as he began his first semester. He observed:

Like it's starting from scratch again, going from when everybody knew you, [when] everybody saw you as a leader to, like, coming as a [college] freshman. Nobody knows you, so you have to start building up relationships and leadership."

Rosa had graduated from high school just 2 years after coming to the United States from Mexico. She brought with her a strong academic background from Mexico, but she was uncertain that her knowledge of English was strong enough for college. Her lack of confidence in her spoken English and her shyness made the first day of class torture for

her. On the other hand, she was determined. She explained why she wanted to get a college degree:

I want to be someone in this world. I don't want to be discriminated for not having a degree. I want to get a good job. I want to have a good life. And that's why. Because I see my father here. In Mexico he had a good job, and here his education didn't count, and he's working [physically hard] right now. And he said to me, you have to study really hard. You have to finish a career here because I don't want you to do the same as I right now. That's why.

Learning, Persistence and Identity

These snapshots of three students at the beginning of their first semester provide a glimpse of the hopes and uncertainty that students bring with them to their first day of community college classes. Studies show that more than half of the students who start at community colleges leave after the first year (Tinto, 1993; Bailey, Jenkins & Leinbach, 2005) and fewer than ¼ of low income students at community colleges earn a degree or certificate (MDRC, 2007).

Further reducing the statistical likelihood that Armando, Laurence, and Rosa will reach their education goals is the fact that they need 2 levels of developmental coursework in reading and writing, and in the case of Armando and Laurence, multiple levels of developmental coursework in math, before they can begin many of the classes they need for their degrees and certificates. Students who need to take multiple levels of developmental coursework are less likely to persist to degrees and certificates (Adelman, 1998; Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Muraskin & Wilner, 2004; US Department of Education, 1996).

One of the ways of looking at the problem of low persistence rates in community colleges is as a problem of students' inadequate academic skills. Developmental studies programs have been implemented at almost all community colleges to help students build

their reading, writing and math skills. Armando, Laurence, and Rosa are beginning their community college career in a developmental studies class.

The students' voices hint at questions about identity. Armando wants others to notice him, to see him differently than he thinks they see him now. Laurence recognizes that the role he played in high school has not moved with him to the college setting where no one knows him. Rosa talks about wanting to be somebody in this world. In the explanation of the theoretical framework for this study, I argue for framing the problem of student persistence in community colleges as a problem of identity development. While students need to improve their reading, writing, and math skills, they also need to see themselves as college students, people who belong in college. I argue that classroom environments like the ones in the study support the emergence of college student identities.

Personal Interest in This Study

This study grew out of my interests in theoretical, practical, and humanistic questions. Having explored sociocultural learning theory and constructive developmental psychology, I am interested in the relationship between learning and identity. As a veteran community college educator, I am interested in practical approaches to complex problems of practice in the community college setting. Because my work in community colleges has been with immigrant students and with students who have been designated as requiring preparatory developmental work in reading, writing, and math, I am especially interested in those students. As a lifelong observer of human beings, I am interested in understanding how others see their experience and make their way in the world.

This research project developed also in part because of my job assignment. Beginning about 1 ½ years before I conducted the study, I had the opportunity with grant support to form a team to design and implement a new developmental education program

option that would allow students to accelerate their movement through the developmental course sequence. We hypothesized that if students could move more quickly through the developmental courses and still be well-prepared for the reading, writing, and math required in their college-level classes, they would be more likely to persist and less likely to drop out because the road to their education goals appeared too long. The team designed a program that included practices identified as effective in the research literature and in our own experience. Those practices included pro-active advising, learning communities, active and interactive teaching strategies, and meaningful contexts for teaching academic skills. Now in its sixth semester, the program has received a national award for innovation from a community college organization. Student outcome data show higher course completion rates and better progress toward college level courses than students in traditional developmental education classes at the college. The quantitative data can document student outcomes, but they cannot describe the classrooms behind the outcomes. This qualitative study is an opportunity to take a fine-grained look at what happened in two of the classrooms in the program and how the students perceived their learning.

Study Setting and Method

The study was conducted in an ethnically diverse, urban community college. I studied the students, teachers, and classroom environments in 2 sections of a reading and writing developmental course. The course was part of an accelerated developmental education program that integrated the teaching of 2 levels of developmental reading and writing into a one semester-long intensive course that met 6 hours per week. I interviewed students and teachers at the beginning and end of the semester, observed many hours of class sessions, and read students' essays and self-assessments.

Findings Overview

The purpose of the study was to describe shifts in students' perceptions of themselves and learning during the course of the semester, the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and the classroom environment the teachers and students created during the semester. At the beginning of the semester, students looked back at their past experiences in education and talked about their hopes for college. Findings about students at the beginning of the semester included their pride in graduating from high school, their conscious decision to come to college in the face of forces that worked against that decision, and the hopes and doubts they brought with them to the first semester experience. The teachers at the beginning of the semester talked about their beliefs about teaching and learning. The descriptions of the classroom environments show how they implemented their beliefs in two classes during the semester of the study. At the end of the semester, students looked back on their experience in the first semester of college. Findings at the end of the semester showed that students had changed in ways that affected their identity as college students. Students also made connections between how they had changed and some of the activities and conditions of the learning environment.

Contribution of Study

Study findings are interpreted through the lenses of constructive developmental psychology and sociocultural learning theory, which shed light on the relationships among learning, identity, and activity in ways that other studies in community college settings have not done. The findings of the study have important implications for classroom practice, for professional development of full and part-time community college faculty, and for organizational and fiscal policies of community colleges at the institutional and state levels.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 2, "Literature Review and Theoretical Framework," I argue that framing the problem of student persistence at community colleges as one of student identity development helps educators to see new approaches to the problem. A review of the research literature about community college completion rates, the effectiveness or remediation, and the literature on student engagement, along with a handful of studies that examine voices of developmental education students makes up the first half of the chapter. In the second half of the chapter I describe the theoretical framework for this study, which draws from the fields of constructive development psychology and sociocultural learning theory.

In Chapter 3, "Method," I list research questions and describe the setting for the study. Data collection procedures are outlined and discussed. The process of data analysis and ways of triangulating findings follow. The rationale for how I chose to present findings concludes the chapter.

In Chapters 4 through 8, I present the findings of the study. Chapters 4 and 5 describe students' perceptions of themselves and the relationship of education to their lives at the beginning of their first semester in college. In Chapter 4, "Looking Back at High School," students talk about their accomplishments and people and experiences that influenced their learning and future goals while they were in high school. In Chapter 5, "Looking Forward to College," students describe their decision to come to college, their hopes and goals for the future, and some of their fears and doubts about being college students. Chapter 6, "The Teachers," introduces the 2 teachers in the study and describes their beliefs about teaching and learning. Chapter 7 "The Class," is a description of the shared experience of teachers, students, and researchers during the semester of the study. The description calls attention to the connections between the teachers' beliefs as

described in Chapter 6 and their implementation in the class. Chapter 8, "Emerging College Student Identities," documents students' descriptions of what they have learned and how they have changed in the course of the semester. Students talk about the effect of specific activities and the classroom environment on their learning.

In Chapter 9, "Discussion and Summary," I return to the theoretical framework to discuss how a learning-as-identity frame relates to study findings. Implications for practice are described.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Complex problems are seldom, if ever, resolved with simple solutions, nor can researchers find single causes for effects that are manifestations of complex systems. (Bateson, 1972; Clarke, 2003). The way that people frame a problem influences the approaches they take to the problem, and using more than one frame allows people to imagine multiple approaches (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Clarke, 2003).

The problem of access to higher education can be framed as prospective students' lack of information about how to negotiate the system, how to apply, register, find classes, and secure financial aid. Using this frame, people work with high school counselors, college recruiters, college advisers, and college information offices. If the problem is framed as one of students' lack of academic skills, we look for other solutions. Many high school reform efforts focus on preparing more students for college. Developmental educators in colleges and universities most frequently respond to students' lack of academic skills by offering or mandating instruction in reading, writing, math, and study skills during students' first year of college. In this study, I frame the issue of access to higher education as one of identity development. Using this frame, educators can understand that what needs to happen with students goes beyond getting better at discrete reading, writing, and math skills. In order to gain access to degree and certificate programs, students need to be able to see themselves as college students. I do not argue that framing the issue as one of identity development excludes other frames. Instead, I argue that it opens our minds to refining and reforming current practice in developmental education and community colleges.

In this chapter, I situate this research study of the perceptions of developmental education students in the context of the “community college equity agenda” (Bailey & Morrest, 2006) and the contested role of developmental education in fulfilling the promise of the open door to higher education. Reviews of research and theory are organized around three frames for the problem of improving access and success of underrepresented groups in higher education. First, I review research that frames the problem as one of inadequate academic skills of students. Secondly, I review research and theory that frames the problem as one of student engagement in learning. Finally, I explain the theoretical perspective I take in this study, which frames the problem of student access and success in college as identity development.

Developmental and Remedial Education

Before beginning a review of the literature, an explanation of the terms “developmental” and “remedial” is in order. K. Patricia Cross differentiated between the two terms in the following way:

If the purpose of the program is to overcome academic deficiencies, I would term the program remedial, in the standard dictionary sense in which remediation is concerned with correcting weaknesses. If, however, the purpose of the program is to develop the diverse talents of students, whether academic or not, I would term the program developmental. Its mission is to give attention to the fullest possible development of talent and to develop strengths as well as to correct weaknesses. (quoted in Roueche & Roueche, 1993, p. 50)

In the 1970s people at community colleges began to question the narrow focus on remediation for community college students, to draw on the work of theorists like Kohlberg and Perry (1999/1968), and to pay attention to developing strengths and talents in addition to correcting academic weaknesses. Programs began to incorporate counseling, tutoring, and study skills, and to work beyond remedial coursework to include support for students in non-remedial courses. Boylan (2002) in his influential literature review of developmental

education research included affective as well as cognitive abilities in the following definitions of developmental education and underprepared students:

Developmental education is defined as courses or services provided for the purpose of helping underprepared college students attain their academic goals. The term underprepared students refers to any students who need to develop their cognitive or affective abilities in order to succeed in a postsecondary educational experience. (p. 3)

Higbee, Arendale, & Lundell (2005) note the historic use of the terms preparatory, compensatory and remedial. The use of the term developmental, they say, marked the influence of student development theory in the work of Perry (1999/1968), Chickering and Reisser (1993/1969), and Astin (1984), and a redefinition to "encompass both the academic and noncognitive factors that influence student success in higher education" (p. 6).

Here I use remedial or developmental, whichever term is used in the report of the research being reviewed. Usually that means the term remedial is used when the focus of the research is the strengthening of reading, writing, and math skills deemed to be weaker than needed for successful academic work in college. I use developmental education when the researcher takes a holistic view of student development. I use developmental education when I refer to programs at colleges that include services and activities that go beyond remediation. The theoretical framework that I use in conducting this study posits that students who persist in college need to develop an identity as a student and is developmental in nature, rather than remedial.

Community Colleges and Access to Higher Education

Access to higher education is increasingly important to maintaining and increasing social and economic equity in U.S. society. As at least some post-secondary education becomes necessary for earning enough money to support a family (Bailey & Morrest, 2006;

McCabe, 2003; Roueche & Roueche, 1999), higher education is challenged to increase the numbers of students from under-represented minority, immigrant, and low income groups.

Some progress has been made in recent decades. Undergraduate enrollment grew by 11% percent from 1992 to 2002, and degree completion grew at similar rates (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005). While progress is being made in degrees awarded to African-American and Hispanic students, they are still underrepresented in comparison to their percentage of the college age population (Bailey, Jenkins, et al., 2005). Without increased access to higher education for under-represented groups, social and economic disparities are likely to continue to increase, and the skilled workforce needed for a global economy will be unavailable (Kazis, 2004). Failure to improve the completion of post-secondary credentials for low income and minority groups will have negative human, societal, and economic consequences.

Community colleges, because of their open admissions policies, proximity to low income neighborhoods, and relatively low tuition costs provide the gateway to post-secondary education for large numbers of people from under-represented groups (Bailey & Morrest, 2006; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). Community colleges are often described as the open door to higher education, open to all "who can profit from instruction" (Roueche & Roueche, 1993, p. 25). They are seen by many as forces for democratization, a second chance for those who have not done well in school, and a means to social and economic advancement (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; McCabe, 2003; Roueche & Roueche, 1993).

Students are going through the open doors of community colleges in increasing numbers, and those students are frequently poor and minority students. In 2002, 42% of all undergraduate students in post-secondary institutions were enrolled in community colleges, more than in any other type of institution of higher education. In the same year, over half of all Hispanic students, 44% of African-American students, and 46% of Asian

students in higher education were enrolled in community colleges (Bailey, Jenkins, et al., 2005). More low-income students attend community colleges than 4-year institutions. According to data from 1995-96, 55% percent of first-semester community college students were from families with income in the bottom 2 income quartiles, compared to 38% in public four-year colleges and universities (Bailey, Jenkins, et al., 2005). Community colleges are also the doorway to higher education for a large percentage of students who are in the first generation of their families to attend college. In 1995-1996, almost half of first-generation beginning students attended community colleges, while about 20 percent of first-generation students began their post-secondary education in 4-year public colleges and universities. (Bailey, Jenkins, et al., 2005)

Immigrant students are attending community colleges in large numbers. Crandall and Sheppard (2004) estimated that about 25% of students enrolled in community colleges are immigrants. Community College of Denver's *Annual Report* stated that 23% of its students spoke a language other than English as a first language (2004). According to data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, in the 1999-2000 academic year approximately 345,000 students with resident alien immigration status were enrolled in community colleges, while fewer than 245,000 with the same immigration status enrolled in 4-year colleges and universities (Jenkins, 2003). However, reliable counts of the numbers of immigrant students in community colleges and higher education in general are not available because colleges do not consistently collect data on immigration status, birth country, and citizenship (Szelényi & Chang, 2002).

While more students are coming through the open door at community colleges, many leave before reaching their academic goals. In 1993, Tinto estimated that over half of the students who began college in 1993 would not earn a degree. Indeed his analysis estimated that 54% of first year community college students would leave after their first

year. Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach (2005) corroborated Tinto's estimate. MDRC (2007), a social policy research organization, estimated that up to 75% of low income students at community colleges do not earn a degree or certificate. Clearly, too many students in higher education leave before reaching their stated education goals.

Developmental Education and the Open Door

One of the ways of framing the problem of students leaving higher education before reaching their education goals is as a problem of inadequate academic skills. Providing instruction in reading, writing, and math skills deemed necessary for success in college courses is one of the missions of developmental education programs.

At community colleges, the admissions door is open to those who have poor high school records and low scores on standardized college admissions tests, those who have been out of school for several years, or who have limited English proficiency. However, once students enter through the open door, they may be surprised and discouraged by the conditions placed on their admission to degree and certificate programs. Many degree and certificate programs within community colleges require set scores on tests of reading, writing, and math or the completion of remedial courses designed to strengthen academic skills in those areas.

Many students from families at all income levels coming out of high school are not fully prepared for the reading, writing and math tasks of college coursework, and fewer children from poorer families are fully prepared (Kazis, 2004; Bailey, 2003). Older students may need review of skills they once commanded or instruction in skills they never mastered. Without programs that effectively prepare students to do the academic work required for degrees and certificates, open access is an empty promise. The open door alone is not enough to solve the problem of access to higher education.

Demographic data in developmental education research give an idea of the numbers of students being referred for remediation. Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics in 2003, Bailey, Jenkins, et al. (2005) found 42% of first year community college students enrolled in at least 1 remedial reading, writing, or math course. Roueche and Roueche (1999) wrote that approximately 50% of new community college students have test scores indicating the need for remediation in reading, writing, or math. Eighty-five percent of the first 2002 Achieving the Dream¹ student cohort needed some developmental education (Achieving the Dream, 2006). At Community College of Denver, 55 % of first-time students in the 2005-2006 academic year enrolled in some developmental education, including ESL or GED preparation (Wiens & Brancard, 2007).

Students of color are disproportionately represented in community colleges as compared to 4-year institutions. They are also somewhat disproportionately represented in remedial courses as compared to all students in community colleges. One study showed slightly higher remedial enrollments for African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students than for White students, and significantly lower remediation rates for Asian/Pacific Islander students (Bailey, Jenkins, et al., 2005). In Achieving the Dream colleges, higher percentages of Native American, Hispanic, African-American, and Asian/Pacific Islander students needed remediation than did White, non-Hispanic students (Achieving the Dream, 2006).

¹ Achieving the Dream is a national initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education and other foundations working in 79 community colleges in 15 states with the goal of increasing student success in community colleges, with emphasis on groups of students under-represented in higher education. As part of the initiative, educational outcomes and demographic data from cohorts of students from the colleges in the initiative are being tracked longitudinally.

Remediation and Degree and Certificate Completion

Some researchers have focused on studying effects of remediation on graduation rates. However, studying the effect of remediation on the success of under-prepared students is methodologically difficult (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005) and has provoked, or perhaps reflected, some disagreement about the effectiveness of remedial coursework (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levy, 2006).

Some studies are cited to support the effectiveness of remedial education. Boylan and Bonham (1992), reporting results from the National Study of Developmental Education undertaken at Appalachia State University, found that 28% of developmental students at 2-year community colleges who first enrolled in 1984 had either graduated or were still enrolled three and a half years later. Boylan and Bonham's report did not make clear whether the remaining 72% had transferred to other institutions or left higher education. Their study also showed developmental students' pass rates in gateway college level math, composition, and social science courses as comparable to the rates for students who were not required to take developmental courses, although their GPAs lagged those of non-developmental students slightly. A study at the Community College of Denver following developmental students from 1993-1997 found that 71.6% of the students who passed the highest level developmental writing course and then attempted Freshman Composition successfully completed the college-level course (Roueche, Ely, & Roueche, 2001). Using a large database from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Attewell et al. (2006) studied a representative sample of students who were in 8th grade in 1988 to ascertain the effect of college remedial coursework on graduation rates. They found that in 2-year institutions, students from the sample who took reading remediation were 11% more likely to earn an associate's or bachelor's degree than students with comparable academic skills who did not have remedial coursework in reading.

Other studies showed students who needed remedial coursework to be less likely to finish degrees and certificates than students who did not need remediation (Adelman, 1998; Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Muraskin & Wilner, 2004; US Department of Education, 1996). The possibility exists, of course, that without remediation even fewer students would have finished degrees. The methodology for studying the effects of remediation on degree and certificate completion is complicated by differing policies in various states and institutions regarding measures used to identify students as needing remediation and whether or not testing and placement into remedial courses is mandatory. In addition, programs vary in quality and approach. A study by Bettinger & Long (2005b), because of a unique data set from the state of Ohio, was able to skirt some of these methodological problems. Because all students in the state tested on the same instrument but not all were required to take remediation, researchers were able to compare students who did take remedial course work with those who did not but had comparable high school preparation, test scores and socio-economic status. Bettinger & Long found that Ohio community college students who completed math remediation were 15% more likely to transfer to a 4-year institution than students with similar test scores who did not complete math remediation. They could not, however, find positive effects of remediation on degree completion.

Bailey, Jenkins, et al. (2005) in their analysis of large databases from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study 1996-2001 and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System found that African-American and Hispanic students who took remedial coursework were much less likely to earn a degree or transfer within 6 years of enrolling in a community college than were African-American or Hispanic students who took no remedial coursework. In contrast, White students who took remedial courses graduated or transferred at almost the same rate as White students who took no remedial

courses. For Hispanic students the difference was especially large. These findings suggest the probability that factors other than academic skills are involved in whether or not students persist to degree completion.

Some of the studies used to make a case for or against the effectiveness of remediation were undertaken in 4-year institutions. The applicability of results from these studies to community colleges is questionable. In a study similar to the Ohio community college student study described above and working from the same database, Bettinger & Long (2005a) found that students in 4-year institutions who completed remedial courses were 15% more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than students with comparable test scores, high school records, and socioeconomic status who did not complete remedial courses. Lavin & Weininger in 1998 (as cited in Attewell et al., 2006) studied students in bachelor's degree programs at the City University of New York who failed one or more of the academic skills tests given when they enrolled and who were placed in remedial courses. They found that more than half of the African-American, Hispanic, and Asian students who initially failed the academic skills tests and completed remedial coursework went on to earn bachelor's degrees, suggesting that the availability of remediation in colleges is important to increasing the numbers of minority students who earn bachelor's degrees.

The FastStart program in which students in this study were enrolled was designed for students who need multiple levels, and therefore, multiple semesters, of developmental coursework. Some studies suggest that students who need multiple levels of remedial coursework are less likely to graduate than those who need just one level. Morris (1994) found that of nearly 4,000 students at Miami-Dade Community College who were judged to need remediation in 3 subject areas, reading, math, and English composition, 42% completed the remedial coursework in those areas and only 9% of them had graduated

after 3 years. Students who needed remediation in only one area graduated at higher rates within the three year period. Given the time required to do remedial coursework in reading, English, and math, that many students did not graduate in 3 years is hardly surprising. Adelman (1998) and the Achieving the Dream initiative (2006) found that students needing multiple levels of remedial coursework were less likely to persist to certificates and degrees than students who needed only one level of remediation.

The numbers of students who need multiple levels of developmental coursework is a large percentage of those who need any developmental courses. At Community College of Denver, of the students who needed developmental courses in the 2005-2006 academic year, 78% needed two or more levels, meaning 2 semesters before they could begin academic work for many degree and certificate programs (Wiens & Brancard, 2007). National data show that 63% of students in community college remediation programs spent 1 year or longer in remediation (Bailey, Jenkins, et al., 2005). More time needed for developmental coursework correlates with less likelihood of persistence to degree and certificate completion (Adelman, 1998; Morris, 1994). FastStart gives students the opportunity to complete 2 levels of developmental coursework in one semester instead of two with the intent of increasing student persistence.

These data have relevance for practitioners at the institutional, programmatic, and classroom level. At the institutional level, such data may support or undermine arguments with state legislatures about the funding of remedial classes. They help administrators at the state and local level to understand the scope of the need for developmental education. They remind us of the diversity of the student population requiring remediation and alert us to differential outcomes for various groups of students. They may serve as benchmarks against which to measure outcome data for local programs. As a program coordinator of an

innovative developmental education program, I want to understand these data in order to gauge how the outcomes of our program compare with a national database.

Student Engagement and Student Retention

The first frame used to view the problem of student departure from community colleges was one of students' inadequate reading, writing, math, and study skills. Using that frame, the response of community college educators is remediation of skills. A second frame represented in the literature is student engagement. Using a frame linking student engagement and student retention, educators have responded with efforts to improve academic and social learning environments for students.

Tinto's Model of Student Retention

Based on his work of analyzing large databases documenting student demographic and student retention data, Tinto (1993) developed a reciprocal model of student retention. In Tinto's model, institutions are committed to creating the best possible learning environment for all of their students, to giving this goal precedence over other institutional goals, and to creating an environment that addresses both the social and intellectual needs of the students. The institution creates an environment that fosters the students' engagement in their own learning. Tinto (2006), drawing on his own work and that of others, identified five conditions that promote student persistence to degrees and certificates: high expectations, supports, feedback, involvement, and learning. Students' perceptions of faculty and staff expectations for their success are important to students' reciprocal engagement in their own education. Academic, social, and personal supports must be integrated into the college and are especially important for first year students. Students are more likely to stay in college if they receive early, frequent feedback about how they are doing in classes. If students are involved in the life of the institution and

perceive that they are valued participants, they are more likely to stay. Finally, students who perceive that they are learning are more likely to persist to graduation.

National Survey of Student Engagement

Ewell, Kuh, and others at Indiana University developed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to measure student engagement. The survey has been administered since 1997 at hundreds of 4-year colleges and universities each year. Developers of the survey wrote questions designed to measure student behaviors and perceptions linked to research on student learning. The questions have been validated with direct measures of student learning (National Survey, 2007). A key finding from the analysis of survey data is a positive relationship between “educationally purposeful activities” and persistence to the second year of college. Moreover, the data show that the positive effects of student engagement are stronger for students of color and for students with weaker academic skills (Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup, & Gonyea, 2007).

In order to describe in more detail the institutional and instructional practices that promote student engagement, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates (2005) conducted case studies at 20 colleges and universities. They identified 5 effective practices used at the selected colleges and universities: academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment.

Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Questions arose among community college educators about the applicability of findings from NSSE to community colleges and their students. What does student engagement look like for students at non-residential 2-year institutions, students who are more likely to be older, to work and go to school part-time, to have family responsibilities, and to demonstrate weaker academic skills on college entrance tests than students at 4-

year institutions? In 2002, community college educators, working from the University of Texas Austin and with Kuh and his colleagues, implemented a version of the survey for community college students titled the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). In five years, approximately 700,000 students from over 500 community colleges across the U.S have completed the survey (Community College Survey, 2007). Key areas of student engagement identified by CCSSE developers are the same as those for NSSE: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. Each of these areas is represented in the survey by questions designed to measure it. Benchmark scores for each area are available against which individual colleges can measure their results. The idea is that colleges use their institutional results to identify institutional weaknesses and devise strategies to support greater student engagement at their colleges. Recommendations from CCSSE include strengthening developmental education and concentrating on engaging students during their first year of enrollment.

In order to engage part-time students, CCSSE evaluators recommend making some student engagement activities mandatory and integrating others into classroom activities. The integration of career exploration, education advising and planning, and some outdoor activities into classroom activities is a guiding principle of the FastStart program in this study and grew out of the experience of seeing that activities not closely linked to classroom activities had low participation rates.

Student Engagement and Instructional Practice

Research and theory in the area of student engagement and persistence provide rationale for instructional practices that engage students. Learning communities and active learning are linked to the research on student engagement in undergraduate education. The literature in developmental education also emphasizes these instructional practices.

Variations of these theories are reflected in the beliefs about teaching and learning voiced by the teachers in this study and in the activities they organize for students in their classrooms. These instructional practices are part of a shift away from framing problems of persistence in college as skill deficits in students, a kind of remedial view. The practices show a shift toward an emphasis on improving learning environments.

Learning Communities

Two or more linked courses, often organized around a theme, in which students enroll as a cohort, constitute what has come to be called a learning community. For example, learning communities sometimes link skills-related courses like developmental reading or writing courses with introductory content courses in sociology or psychology. Pairing developmental reading and writing has been shown to support improvement in both skills (Brooch et al., 2007; Boylan, 2002). Some learning communities are team taught. In theory, learning communities increase student engagement with content, instructors, and other students.

Researchers have investigated whether and how learning communities affect student learning and persistence. Price (2005) reviewed the research on learning communities and found that for students in community colleges, participation in learning communities had a significant positive relationship to student persistence. NSSE research in 4-year institutions found that when a learning community made frequent use of discussion groups and integrated content and teaching across paired courses, students reported deeper understanding of content and stronger social networks (National Survey, 2007). Learning communities that are part of a longitudinal study at Kingsborough Community college enroll first-year students in one remedial course, usually in writing, one academic content course, and a college orientation course (Bloom and Sommo, 2005). Early results show students in the learning communities had better GPAs and pass rates

than students in traditional courses, especially in remedial courses. However, learning community students did not persist in subsequent semesters at higher rates than other students. Researchers say that it is still too early to gauge impact of the first-year learning communities on retention, degree completion and transfer rates.

Tinto (1997) studied students enrolled in cross-disciplinary learning communities at Seattle Central Community College using quantitative and qualitative methods. Students in the learning communities reported more perceived gains in learning as compared to students enrolled in traditional sections of the courses. Students also persisted to the 2 subsequent semesters at a significantly higher rate than students in traditional classes. The qualitative data from Tinto's study is particularly relevant to my study of students in the FastStart program. Tinto found that students in the learning communities built supportive peer groups, formed social networks, and participated in the construction of knowledge. All of these results are corroborated in the FastStart study. Tinto attributes students' reports of new understandings about learning and the nature of knowledge, at least in part, to the way instructors from different disciplines modeled academic discussion as they worked to relate one discipline to the other. The instructors also created a classroom environment in which students' knowledge and experience was valued in discussion and assignments. These findings fit with Baxter Magolda's (2001) model for promoting self-development in college learning environments. (See pages 50-56 for an explication of Baxter Magolda's work.)

Active Learning

The instructional practice of promoting active learning is another thread in theory, practice, and research found in both the student engagement literature and the developmental education literature. Developmental educators draw on learning theorists from outside developmental education. Boylan (2002), a leader in developmental

education, wrote "active learning methods are characterized by the fact that they are designed to elicit students' active participation in the learning process" (p. 102). Boylan credited Freire with the concept of active learning, but certainly Dewey's work on experiential learning is part of the active learning tradition. Freire (1970) argued against what he called a banking theory of learning, essentially a transmission model, in which the teacher narrates and the student listens. He called for problem-posing education which involves students and teacher together in action and reflection. Dewey (1938) linked experience and learning in a proleptic relationship, identifying properties of learning he called continuity and interaction. In Dewey's theory, all experience results in learning of some kind. What people have learned from their experience in the past influences how they perceive new experiences in the present. The teacher, rather than transmitting information, should organize experiences for students from which they can learn, keeping in mind the students' past experiences and their interaction with the present experience. Some would argue that learning by definition takes place through activity. Clarke (2003) defined learning as "change over time through engagement in activity" (p. 54).

Boylan's (2002) description of active learning also includes the theory of constructivism. In this theory of learning, the student is engaged in making meaning. Mezirow (2000) explains learning in terms of "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to future action" (p. 5). Like Dewey, Mezirow's description is one of a proleptic process in which the past experiences influence present and future understandings. Constructivist theory adds the idea that learners make meaning from their experience to Dewey's ideas of learning from experience.

Other Research in Developmental Education

Other threads of research in developmental education include institutional and organizational practices, program components, and additional instructional practices to support effective developmental education. Recent comprehensive literature reviews of research in developmental education include these three threads. (Boylan, 2002; Brooch et al., 2007; Schwartz & Jenkins, 2007). Goldrick-Rab (2007) reviews the literature on transitions to college, remedial education, and persistence to degree completion and makes suggestions for improvements in community colleges in those three areas. Most relevant to this study is theory and research supporting instructional practices used by the two teachers in this study: active learning, a holistic view of the student, using a variety of methods to accommodate student diversity, and the social nature of learning.

Contribution of This Study

The students in this study are co-enrolled as 2 cohorts in learning communities comprised of four linked courses, 2 levels of developmental reading and 2 levels of developmental writing. Each cohort has one teacher for the linked reading and writing courses. The teaching of reading and writing is fully integrated. One of the values of this study is the data showing how the teachers of the cohorts actualize their beliefs about teaching and learning in the activities they plan for the students in the cohort. The teachers' beliefs about the importance of creating a mutually supportive community of learners and the role of activity and interactivity in learning are crucial in learning communities. Through the empirical, qualitative data describing how the teachers build communities of learners and engage students in learning, this study adds to the body of research on how to engage students.

Generation 1.5 Research

Because over half of the students in this study were born outside the United States, a glimpse into the literature about immigrant students in community colleges is relevant. Only a very small amount of research has been done about the transition to higher education of students, who like about half of the students in this study came to the United States with their parents during their elementary or secondary school years. The term Generation 1.5 is used by some researchers and educators to refer to students who are first generation immigrants to the U.S., but who have spent some of their K-12 school years in U.S. schools, and who share characteristics of both first and second generation immigrants (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999). Harklau (2001) also refers to the same group of students as language minority students.

When these students come to community colleges, they often have some English language development needs, and often test into either developmental English and reading or English as a Second Language classes, depending on the student's language proficiency and the college's testing and placement procedures. Either placement poses some problems. In addition, tests used for placement may fail to differentiate between widely disparate learners. For example, the foreign-born students in my study, along with the U.S.-born students, had all placed into the same levels of developmental reading and composition on the basis of their scores on a nationally-normed, widely-used, computerized test of reading comprehension and sentence-level word choice and sentence structure. While students had test scores on these tests in common, their oral proficiency in English in the interviews and in class discussions varied widely.

Very often, students resent placement into community college English as a Second language classes. They may have already exited English language programs in high school and may view ESL classes as moving backwards. When they get to the ESL

classes at the community college, they find newcomer adult students who may be much less proficient orally than they. Students' language development needs may be different from the needs of students in developmental reading and composition classes, and teachers in developmental reading and writing classes may not have the expertise to work with language minority students. Research about this population in community colleges is sparse (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999). A small body of research deals with college level composition for Generation 1.5 students. Research about reading development for this group of students in the community college is very scarce.

Harklau (2000) reported a study of 3 immigrant students in their last semester in a U.S. high school and first semester in a community college. She found the students were asked to use textbooks in their community college ESL classes that represented U.S. culture in superficial ways that contradicted their knowledge of the culture of U.S. urban high schools. Further, Harklau found that the institutional representation of the students in her study was markedly different in community college than it had been high school. While the immigrant students were viewed in a mainly positive light in the high school, as high school graduates in ESL classes in a community college, they were viewed more negatively and in a way that prompted resistance. On the basis of her findings, Harklau calls on ESL educators to be more conscious of how institutional representations of ESL students shape students' perceptions of themselves and their attitudes toward school.

Like Harklau, I am interested in student identities. Her work explores "identity in movement" as students negotiate the high school to college transition and the changing representations of student identities across institutions (Harklau, 2001, p. 41). Harklau in a 2001 research report noted a dearth of studies that span the secondary and post-secondary worlds. In her 2001 study, she investigated differences in literacy practices in high school and college from the perspective of the student, following 4 language minority

students in their last year of high school and first year in college, 3 at a community college, 1 at a state university. The students found the following literacy expectations in college as different from high school: the high importance of note-taking, less emphasis on essay writing except in remedial courses, and the explicitness of course requirements in course syllabi. Similarities included the centrality of textbooks and the widespread use of multiple choice tests. Students noted that in college the quantity of reading was greater than in high school. Counter to their high school experience, the students found the expectation that textbook reading assignments were to be done outside of class and might or might not be reviewed in class. Harklau noted that high school teachers related literacy activities to students' lives more than their college teachers did. According to Harklau, the four students in the study were more likely to view high school teachers as mentors and college teachers as adversaries. The students were more likely to see teachers as responsible for their learning in high school and themselves are responsible for their learning in college. The study I have conducted substantiates some of the learners' perceptions recorded in Harklau's study, especially regarding student responsibility, and provides more detail on the nature of students' shifts in perceptions of literacy practices after a semester in the developmental reading/writing classrooms described.

Crandall and Sheppard (2004) mention one other group of community college students, who may be placed in English as a Second language or developmental reading and writing classes: World English students. These students already speak English fluently when they come to the U.S. and may have had some of their elementary or secondary schooling in English. Depending on their education level and their country of origin, the differences from standard American English may be minor or substantial. Their language development needs differ widely. Two of the students in this study, one from Ghana and one from the Philippines, fell into this category.

Studies of Developmental Students' Perceptions

Several researchers in developmental education have called for more research that pays attention to student perceptions (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Grubb & Cox, 2005; Harklau, 2001; Higbee et al., 2005). Bailey and Alfonso (2005) believe that interviews with students are necessary to understand the reasons behind the trends that quantitative studies document. Harklau (2001), who has researched the transition of language minority, or Generation 1.5 students, from high school to higher education laments the absence of student perceptions of the transition:

[In the current literature], absent are the voices and perceptions of the principal stakeholders in the high school to college transition, the students themselves. The main value of qualitative case studies such as these lies in providing fine-grained analyses of the perceptions of individual learners about literacy. (p. 65)

Higbee et al. (2005) gave the following rationale for paying attention to student perceptions:

[A]n educator might know quantitatively how a student is performing in a course based on traditional measures such as grade point average, specific exam grades, and other achievement markers. However, when a student arrives underprepared for college or is underperforming in a first-year course, learning more about the nature of this student's experience, including the influence of cultural background or peer and family communities, may produce further insights into improving performance. Because students' experiences are richly layered and complex, researching underlying causes and perceptions through listening to student voices can strengthen the work of developmental educators. (pp. 8-9)

In this study, students' perceptions of family and peers and their influences on students' perceptions of learning emerged as major themes.

Reviews of studies that feature student perceptions follow. All of the studies are qualitative, but they employ a variety of theoretical frameworks. Each has something in common with my study.

Responsibility and Control

The first two studies are similar to mine in that they inquire into students' perceptions of responsibility and control. Smith and Price (1996) explored motivation and effort in a study of students at a university commuter campus who were placed into developmental education courses. The ethnically mixed group of students responded to multiple choice and open-ended questions to elicit their perceptions of their high school experience. Researchers sought to understand how students perceived the locus of control for their academic achievement. Their responses were then analyzed using attribution theory, a theory of motivation from social psychology. Although the majority of the students said either that they "enjoyed" high school, or "tolerated" it, and a large majority of them said they had good relationships with their teachers, over half of them also rated their high schools as average or below. A common criticism from the students of their high schools was that the environment did not push students harder. In other words, many students placed the locus of control for their academic achievement outside their personal control. A student's perception of locus of control might be external or internal. Smith and Price (1996) conclude:

If the analysis is valid, according to the attributional theory of motivation, that these developmental students have external locus of control for academic outcomes, then it is logical to conclude that they may also lack the ability to invest more of their "selves" in academic success. They may continue to attribute poor performances to external causes in order to maintain a positive self-perception. (p 4)

Smith and Price go on to suggest that how an instructor phrases responses to students' performance can help them shift locus of control "by helping them analyze the causes of failure and understand the role of [their own] effort in their successes and failure (p. 4)."

Valeri-Gold, Callahan, Deming, Mangram, and Errico (1997) collected written responses of 124 developmental education students in a commuter university to 10

prompts administered over a 10-week period during an academic quarter in an entry-level composition class. Students were prompted to write about academic, social, family and personal issues. Responses were coded and classified by 5 raters. Results showed that while many students wanted to be involved in campus activities with peers, they were often not involved because of the demands of the multiple roles of worker, family member, student, parent, and friend. Students worried about financial aid availability and making ends meet. Students tended to identify an "external locus of control" for their successes. In other words, their successes were credited to friends, teachers, relatives, or God.

Like Smith and Price (1996), Valeri-Gold et al., identified an external locus of control as common among developmental learners. Smith and Price's work about locus of control is somewhat similar to Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory of subject and object perspectives on experience, which forms part of the theoretical framework of this study. Part of the analysis in my study involved examining student interview transcripts and student writing to hypothesize the extent to which students believed they had control over and felt responsible for their responses to situations. The results of my study show that students differed in their perceptions of responsibility and control, and that some students took responsibility in some contexts, but not in others. I would question whether it can be said that having an external locus of control is more characteristic of developmental students than of other same-age, same-culture peers. I think that the interview method in my study gives a more differentiated and complex picture of students' perceptions of control than the questionnaire method used by Smith and Price and that Kegan's subject-object theory allows for a somewhat different lens than locus of control. In addition, my study supports Smith and Price's suggestion that teachers' responses to students can help them increase their perception of control.

Study of Epistemology

The theoretical framework of my study links students' perceptions of epistemology, identity, and interpersonal relationships. Cole, Goetz, & Wilson (2000) investigated the epistemological beliefs of students they described as underprepared. The students had been admitted provisionally to the university because of relatively low standardized test scores and their high school academic records. The students were required to take a 5-week study skills course. The researchers analyzed the results of the answers of 101 of these freshman students to a questionnaire administered at the beginning and the end of the five week study skills session. The questionnaire was designed to measure the students' epistemological beliefs. Students were classified along a continuum from naïve to sophisticated on five constructs: certain knowledge, rigid learning, innate ability, omniscient authority, and quick process. After five weeks, students generally continued to score on the naïve end of the spectrum on all of the constructs. However, they showed a statistically significant shift toward more sophistication on Quick Process, the naïve version of which is that learning is immediate—the learner either gets it the first time, or he does not. So after instruction in study skills, students showed more of a tendency to believe that their prolonged efforts could increase their learning. Interestingly, the student data showed statistically significant shifts to more naiveté on the constructs of omniscient authority and rigid learning. After 5 weeks in college, this group of students was more likely to believe that knowledge is held by all-knowing individuals like professors or available in comprehensive textbooks. They were also more likely to believe that learning occurs when knowledge is carefully organized and explained. Cole et al. suggest the shifts reflect the prevalence of lecture as a mode of instruction in first-year university courses and the relative absence of student activity designed to help students acquire knowledge. Further,

they believe that students need instruction in more than study skills and reading strategies in order to be academically successful.

I find the study by Cole et al. interesting and relevant to my study, even though the students in the studies are quite different. The students in their study were almost all White and were enrolled in a university. The community college students in my study were ethnically diverse and had lower college entrance scores than the students in Cole's study. What I find interesting is the connection Cole et al. make between instructional practice and students' epistemological beliefs. When students were taught study and reading strategies designed to help them understand or learn better, they were more likely to believe that their effort could influence their learning. On the other hand, when they were taught by lecture and tested on multiple choice tests, they were more likely to believe that knowledge is something created by experts and transmitted to them. I argue that if students are going to be taught primarily by lecture, then naïve epistemological beliefs may be entirely adequate. If the professors want their students to develop more sophisticated epistemological beliefs, then their instructional practices have to include activities that allow for those beliefs to develop. In addition to students' perceptions, my study examines teachers' epistemological beliefs and the coherence between those beliefs and their instructional practice.

Study Using a Sociocultural Framework

Another study is especially relevant to my study because the theoretical frameworks both draw on sociocultural learning theory and practice theory. Beach, Lundell, and Jung (2002) studied 14 students in a developmental education program at a university over 2 years. Students participated in 5 interviews over the 2-year-period in which they talked about their social worlds. Their academic writing was also analyzed. Instead of describing the students as deficient in reading, writing, or math skills, the authors looked at

students and their experiences through the lens of the social negotiation of tensions between their peer, family, work, and university worlds. Like my study, the study by Beach et al. draws connections between participation in activity and developing identities as college students:

Developmental college students, like all first-year students, attempt to define themselves as “college students” based on their imagined and actual experiences of the academic world when first entering higher education. This activity is especially pronounced when they are externally placed in a separate program or perceive themselves as taking basic courses. In doing so, they are attempting to legitimize their social practices and identities as having some significance related to prior expectations they formulated about college. This suggests the need to examine these students' perspectives of newly acquired social practices involved in their transition from high school to college, along with their levels of engagement with their college worlds. (Beach et al., 2002, p. 84)

Beach et al. (2002) use Wenger's (1998) concept of learning trajectories in relationship to communities of practice—peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary, outbound—to explain developmental students' negotiations of their peer, family, work and university worlds. They describe students' social worlds as congruent or incongruent with the college world. An effective developmental program assists students in acquiring new practices that help them in moving among their social worlds. The value of the study, say the researchers, is in helping college educators understand developmental students' negotiation of movement among their worlds.

Implications for This Study

The element of intellectual challenge for students emerged in the Beach et al. (2000) study as it did in mine. Several students in my study mentioned that they liked the challenging content and pace of the developmental class in the study. Beach et al., wrote:

In stating their opposition to courses they did not perceive as challenging, students also began to recognize their own deeper, intrinsic motivation for learning, as opposed to being motivated simply to obtain grades. In some cases, they recognized that getting good grades did not necessarily mean that they were learning. Students placed a higher value on courses that asked them to take direct

responsibility for their learning and that stimulated them to think critically and creatively. (p. 102)

Shifts in some students' perceptions of the importance of grades as a measure of learning and the desire to read and think critically are evident in my study as well.

Beach et al. (2002) discussed their concerns about the university culture as whole, not just the culture pertaining to developmental students. As they followed the students after they completed their developmental coursework, they found relatively low retention rates, not only for the former developmental students, but across the university. They suggested that these low retention rates

pointed not only to student underperformance, but also, for some, to an emerging disenchantment with the larger University's culture. This suggests the need to understand the aspects of the University culture that may be leading to such disenchantment, in addition to problems with advising, scheduling, or time management. (p. 102)

During research interviews for my study, staff voiced similar concerns about FastStart students. Would the culture of the college and its classrooms support students adequately in future classes?

Two of these studies (Beach et al., 2002, Valeri-Gold et al., 1997) reported observations that students in developmental programs felt stigmatized by their placement in the developmental programs. Interestingly, the feeling of stigmatization about being placed in developmental education at the community college in my study was quite muted. There are several possible explanations. First of all, larger percentages of students at the community college are required to enroll in developmental education classes. At the Community College of Denver, more than half of beginning students start in at least one developmental course. Secondly, conversations with administrators and staff at the Community College of Denver and college documents, like the catalog and annual reports, showed that providing developmental education is a central part of the college's mission

(Community College of Denver, 2004, 2005). Finally, students in the FastStart program were part of an accelerated developmental education program. Students reported feeling pride that they were in the program and expected to complete the sequence of developmental courses in half the time of other students.

Except for Harklau's (2000, 2001) studies of language minority students, all of the studies of developmental student perspectives reviewed here were done in 4-year colleges or universities, not in community colleges. Studies of the perceptions of community college students in developmental education are needed to inform our practice. The primary purpose of this study is to inform the practice at the institution where the study took place, but it offers insight into students at other community colleges, especially those in diverse, urban settings with substantial immigrant populations.

Theoretical Framework

In this study I suggest a third frame for viewing the problem of students' leaving college before reaching their goals. True, many first-year community college students need to improve their reading, writing, and math skills in order to learn in college classes. Yes, classrooms and colleges need to be places that engage students in learning and the life of the institution. In addition, students need to develop identities as college students. Students need to believe they belong in the college world in order to decide to stay. As with the other two frames, the identity frame is one of reciprocal responsibility. The student has a responsibility to engage in the activities of the college community, and the college has the responsibility of building supportive learning environments that foster students' identity development.

Identity is conceptualized in this study as a learner's socially negotiated sense of self in relationship to his or her environment. The study uses a theoretical framework that draws on aspects of sociocultural learning theory, practice theory, and constructive

developmental psychology. The theoretical formulations derive from observable connections among identity, learning, participation in activity, and relationships with others. Understanding these connections in a particular context can help in program design, orientation of teachers, and pedagogical and curricular approaches. In this section, I outline the work of theorists in sociocultural learning theory and cognitive developmental psychology and show how they relate to the study.

The research questions are questions about the students, the teachers, and the classroom environment:

- How do students in two developmental education learning community classes perceive themselves in relationship to college, learning, and career goals at the beginning and end of the semester?
- What beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning do the teachers of the two sections espouse?
- How do the teachers implement those beliefs in the classroom?

Communities of Practice and Figured Worlds

In social theories of learning, identity and learning are inextricably connected. Identity and learning are "inseparable from issues of practice, community and meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). Learning changes what people can do. It allows them entry into and increasing participation in communities of practice and therefore transforms their identity. Wenger calls identity "lived experience of participation in specific communities, a way of being in the world" (p. 151). Students in this study participate in a developmental education learning community. Data from interviews, student writing, and classroom observations document students' participation in the learning community and shifts in the ways they view learning and themselves.

Practice theory provides another way of conceptualizing the community college and the course in which the students in the study take part. The community college in this study can be seen as a figured world in which students, faculty, staff, and administrators

participate. Figured worlds (Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, & Cain, 1998) are conceptualizations of the contexts in which people learn and form identities.

Figured worlds, like communities of practice, are characterized by their social and historical nature, activity, and participation, and serve as a context for identity formation.

Figured worlds are “socially produced, culturally constructed activities” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 40). Further, they are

historical phenomena, to which we are recruited or into which we enter, which themselves develop through the works of their participants. Figured worlds, like activities, are not so much things or objects to be apprehended, as processes or traditions of apprehension which gather us up and give us form as our lives intersect them. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41)

The significance of figured worlds in our lives “does not derive from holding them ‘in mind’ . . . , but from re-creating them by work with others” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41). Identity in this theory is situated in collectively formed activities of figured worlds. Using Holland's theoretical framework, I examine how students engage in activity with others in the figured world of their learning community and the community college. Through observation of the classroom, listening to student voices in interviews, and reading their written work, connections emerge between activity and shifts in students' perceptions of themselves and learning. The connections between activity and shifts in students' perceptions can inform teacher practice.

Paying attention to the activities in which students participate and how they participate is an important part of understanding how they see themselves because identity and participation in activity are linked. Identity is constituted through participation, through engagement in activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995; Wenger, 1998). Rogoff (1995) wrote about participatory appropriation and links it to both learning and identity. Participatory appropriation “refers to how individuals change through their involvement in one or another activity, in the process becoming prepared for subsequent involvement in

related activities" (p. 142). I take this as Rogoff's definition of learning. She goes on to say that participatory appropriation is not acquisition, but instead "a process of becoming" (p. 142). I see the concept of participatory appropriation as linking learning, participation, activity, and identity. Examples from student interviews and written self-assessments of learning demonstrate connections between shifts in students' perceptions of themselves as learners and college students and the activities in which they participate during the semester.

Proleptic Nature of Identity

This study traces changes in students' perceptions of themselves and learning across the course of a semester. If we conceive of identity as a fixed or slowly changing human characteristic, then finding observable changes in the course of one semester would be unlikely. However, in this theoretical framework, identity formation is ongoing. Identity is not fixed in time. It is "a constant becoming" (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). People are "always engaged in forming identities, in producing objectifications of self-understandings that may guide subsequent behavior" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 4). Identity is also proleptic in nature; that is, a person's past, present, and future are simultaneously at work in identity formation. Wenger (1998) wrote, "As trajectories, our identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present" (p. 155). Rogoff (1995) also sees time as part of an understanding of learning. From her perspective,

time is an inherent aspect of events and is not divided into separate units of past, present, and future. Any event in the present is an extension of previous events and is directed toward goals that have not yet been accomplished. As such, the present extends through the past and future and cannot be separated from them (Rogoff, 1995, p. 155).

Sfard and Prusak (2005) imply a connection between present and future when they write about actual and designated identities. For example, Melissa, one of the students in this study, described an actual identity when she wrote about herself as the

mother of four, very unsure of her decision to come to college after having been out of school for 13 years. She believed her reading and writing skills were weak, and she felt intimidated by the younger students in the class. However, when she wrote about her goals of getting an associate's degree in business and opening her own restaurant, she described a designated identity. Learning, and a goal of developmental education, is "closing the gap between actual and designated identities" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 19).

The results in this study are presented in an order that reflects the proleptic nature of identity development. In Chapter 4, "Looking Back at High School," the students look back at their experiences in high school. In Chapter 5, "Looking Forward to College," students describe their reasons for coming college and look forward to the coming semester in college. In Chapter 6, "The Teachers," the beliefs about teaching and learning held by the teachers as they look forward to the coming semester are described. In Chapter 7, "The Class," the students experience the present, the first semester of college, drawing on their experience in the past and articulating their goals for the future. In Chapter 8, "Emerging College Student Identities," the students look back at the first semester and forward once again to next semester of college with new perspectives on their past experiences, their selves in the present, and their plans for the future.

Imagination and Narrative

Imagination is an important element in identity development and agency. Imagination is "a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (Wenger, 1998, p. 176). Holland et al. (1998) theorize connections between participation in activity and thought. They wrote, "The social practices of 'acting otherwise' become the grounds for our 'thinking otherwise'" (p. 236). In turn, what people are able to think about or imagine can become part of their identity and contribute to agency. As Holland et al. (1998) maintain, "without the capacity to

formulate other social scenes in imagination, there can be little force to sense of self, little agency" (p. 236). The students in the study participate in teacher-organized activities—research, writing, and interview assignments—that invite students to imagine themselves in new roles. The teachers provide contexts in which students can “act otherwise”—as competent readers, writers, and thinkers.

Narrative is both a tool for understanding the identity of others and a tool for the understanding and forming of our own identities. Holland et al. (1998) wrote:

People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities. (p. 3)

Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) work on inner speech and Bakhtin's (1981) work on the authoring of selves, Holland et al. (1998) make a case for the importance of narrative in identity formation.

According to Vygotsky (1978), a child uses speech socially to talk about an activity as he or she engages in them. The child also directs the speech toward himself or herself, and eventually the speech takes place only in the child's head. This inner speech functions to direct the actions of the child. Vygotsky saw inner speech as a tool the child uses to begin behaving differently.

Bakhtin's (1981) work focused on the writing of literature. The writing of a single author is not, in fact, the writing of just that author, he argues. It is heteroglossic; that is, it includes the voices of many other authors and speakers. He wrote, “Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's words is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (p. 354). Bakhtin believed that people escape the situation of having their words be solely those of others by “orchestrating” the voices and taking a

stance in relationship to the voices in the authoring of their own texts (Holland et al., 1998). Within historical and cultural constraints, individuals may find a space of authoring to make meaning of their lives (Holland et al., 1998.) "In the making of meaning . . . we 'author' the world and ourselves in that world" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p.10).

In describing our identities or the identity of another, we tend to say, "I am a teacher" or "He is an immigrant," as if these identities exist separately from the words we use to talk about them. Sfard and Prusak (2005) hold that identity is a discursive construct rather than a thing in the world. By appropriating the discourse of a particular community, people form identities that make themselves part of the community.

Several researchers have used Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) (Bateson, 1972; Holland et al., 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991) to illustrate the connection between the discourse of a community and becoming a member of it. The task facing the novice members of AA is reshaping their identities to a non-drinking alcoholic. One of the ways in which this is accomplished for many novices is through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The novices listen to the stories of old-timers and learn over time to fit their stories into the same pattern. In the process of narrating their own personal life stories, the novices move toward more central participation. The stories reconstruct their identity, help to constitute the tellers' current and future actions (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and help the tellers to understand why and how they are alcoholics (Holland et al., 1998).

People use narratives to establish their own identities. As a researcher paying attention to the narratives of the students in the study, I gained a window on how they understood their identities during the semester of the study. I used the narratives of students in the study—their essays, the stories they told in interviews, the assertions they made in class—to answer the central question of the study: How do students understand

themselves in relationship to college, education and the futures they imagine for themselves?

Constructive Developmental Psychology

In addition to sociocultural learning theory and practice theory, the work of constructive developmental psychologists contributes to the theoretical framework underlying this study. In this section I review the work of Perry (1999/1968), Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997/1986), Kegan (1982, 1994), and Baxter Magolda (1992, 1999, 2001). All of these scholars are concerned with how adults develop ways of knowing. All of them developed categories of epistemological development. They found identity and relationships with others to be integral to epistemological development.

This section begins with a review of Erikson's conceptualization of identity. Summaries of the theories of constructive developmental psychology follow. The implications of these theories for data analysis in this study are included.

Erikson and Identity

Erikson (1968) offered no concise definition of identity. On the question of definition, he wrote,

"Identity" and "identity crisis" have in popular and scientific usage become terms which alternatively circumscribe something so large and so seemingly self-evident that to demand a definition would almost seem petty, while at other times the meaning is lost, and it could just as well be called something else. (p. 15)

Erikson's conceptualization of identity includes recognition of the social and developmental nature of identity formation. Identity-making is "a process 'located' *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of the communal culture*" (Erikson, 1968, p. 22).

Erikson's further description of identity formation emphasizes the social aspect of the self:

Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he

judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and the types that have become relevant to him. (pp. 22-23)

In other words, Erikson saw identity as how people see themselves reflected in the eyes of others and how they position themselves in respect to those perceptions.

Erikson (1968) expanded the idea of the social contextualization of identity formation to include historical contexts. "The youth of today is not the youth of 20 years ago," he wrote (p.26). The historical context in which an individual lives and the personal history of the individual play important roles in identity development (Erikson, 1968; Tatum, 1997).

Erikson with his "Eight Stages of Man" (1959) theorized the development of the self from birth to late adulthood. He placed identity formation in adolescence, the fifth stage. Adolescence is the time for the "final assembly of all the converging identity elements" (p. 163). The "final identity . . . at the end of adolescence . . . includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and reasonable coherent whole of them" (p. 162). Erikson (1975) defined three stages of development after adolescence and attributed to those stages important tasks for the preservation and renewal of identity.

Erikson's placement of identity formation in late adolescence contrasts with sociocultural views of identity formation as on-going in adulthood. Cognitive developmental psychologists, while building on Erikson's work on the development of self, have explored and theorized the development of identity, or sense of self, in the years after adolescence.

Perry's Scheme of Intellectual Development

Perry (1999/1968) studied the intellectual development of college students. The other constructive developmental psychologists described below build on his pioneering work. During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, Perry and his team interviewed 170

students from Ivy League schools one time during each of the four years of their undergraduate study. All but 4 of the students were male. Based on the interview data, Perry developed his Scheme of Intellectual Development, which identified 9 positions along a continuum. The positions describe epistemological stances. College students at positions 1 to 3 view knowledge dualistically, as right or wrong, good or bad. At the higher end of these positions, students begin to question their ideas about the certainty of knowledge but attribute uncertainty to authorities not yet having enough information. At positions 4 and 5, students move to seeing knowledge as uncertain and dependent on context. Students in positions 6 to 9 gradually develop their personal commitments to viewpoints and responsibilities in a world they understand to be uncertain. Perry connected the movement toward commitment with identity development. "Identity" he wrote, "derives from both the content and forms, or stylistic aspects, of commitments" (p. 152).

Evidence of students' dualistic views of knowledge can be found in the data from my study. The stated philosophy of the teachers in the study was to help students move beyond a view of knowledge as right and wrong answers. In the classroom, the teachers responded to some manifestations of students' dualistic views by using strategies to nudge students toward an expanded view of knowledge.

Women's Ways of Knowing

Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997/1986) were dissatisfied with the way women were represented in Perry's study. While acknowledging the importance of his ground-breaking work, they did not believe the study's method allowed ways of knowing to emerge that might be more prevalent for women. Belenkey et al. interviewed 135 women from different kinds of educational institutions. Ninety of these women attended 9 different academic institutions, including an adult education program in a poor, rural area, an urban community college, private and public colleges and one Ivy League school. The other 45

women in the study were recruited from programs offered by service agencies for people seeking information about or assistance with parenting. This ethnically, socio-economically, and educationally diverse population is more like the students in my study than is Perry's population of students.

Belenkey et al.(1997/1986) praised Gilligan (1982) for her work on moral development in women as an alternative to work with male subjects by male psychologists. Belenkey et al. elaborated on the need for research and theory that highlight the perspectives of women:

With the Western tradition of dividing human nature into dual but parallel streams, attributes traditionally associated with the masculine are valued, studied, and articulated, while those associated with the feminine tend to be ignored. Thus, we have learned a great deal about the development of autonomy and independence, abstract critical thought, and the unfolding of a morality of rights and justice in both men and women. We have learned less about the development of interdependence, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought. (pp. 6-7)

I was interested in the work on women's ways of knowing because just over one half of the students in my study are women and because I wanted to avoid forcing students' stories into a framework based on perspectives and experiences very different from their own. One category of knowing emerged in Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's work that had no parallel in Perry's work with men in prestigious colleges. They described a group of women as silenced (Belenkey & Stanton, 2000). Women in this group tended to be socially isolated and to have grown up in violent contexts. They believed themselves unable to learn through language. They were voiceless. I think that a small group of students at community colleges may fit into this category. I think particularly of women who are involved in or working their way out of abusive relationships with men. One of the students in my study showed some evidence of having felt silenced in the past and was beginning to distance herself from her husband who was obstructing her attendance in college in concrete ways like taking away her car keys.

For Belenkey and her co-researchers, the understanding of self and the negotiation of relationships with others are important elements in transforming women's ways of knowing. They wrote:

The quest for self and voice plays a central role in transformations in women's ways of knowing. In a sense, each new perspective we have described can be thought of as providing a new, unique training ground in which problems of self and other, inner and outer authority, voice and silence can be worked through. Within each perspective, although partial solutions are possible, new problems arise. (Belenkey et al., 1997/1986, p. 133-134)

Drawing on their interviews, they described three women who helped them define the fifth epistemological position, that of Constructivist Knowing. Caring for others, understanding their selves, and finding their voices are integral to Constructivist Knowing. They described the Constructivist Knowers:

These women were all articulate and reflective people. They noticed what was going on with others and cared about the lives of people about them. They were intensely self-conscious, in the best sense of the word—aware of their own thought, their judgments, their moods and desires. Each concerned herself with issues of inclusion and exclusion, separation and connection; each struggled to find her own voice—her own way of expressing what she knew and cared about. Each wanted her voice and actions to make a difference to other people and in the world. Although none of the three might jump so high as Freud or Darwin to invent new theories that “change everything for everyone,” all three had learned the profound lesson that even the most ordinary human being is engaged in the construction of knowledge. (Belenkey et al., 1997/1986, p. 133)

Kegan's Orders of Consciousness and Subject-Object Shifts

Kegan's (1982, 1994) work focuses on the evolving nature of the self at adolescence and beyond. In his examinations of “the mental demands of modern life” (1994), Kegan outlines ways in which the adults are called upon to develop new ways of understanding their experience and new ways of viewing the self and their relationships to others. He theorizes five orders of consciousness and makes a distinction between self as subject and self as object. The concepts of subject and object are key to understanding how a person moves from one order of consciousness to another. One of the lenses I have

used with the data in my study is the subject-object distinction, looking for ways in which students show evidence of regarding their experience as either subject or object.

George Herbert Mead (1934) described the self as reflexive, or “that which can be both subject and object” (pp. 136-137). The person can be both the subject, the agent of the experience, and the object, the observer of the self. In Kegan’s (1994) theory, the concepts of subject and object serve to mark important differences between the orders of consciousness. In other words, shifting from direct experience of an aspect of the self to being able to reflect on that aspect of the self is part of a transition to a new order of consciousness. For example, very young children live in the moment and experience self as defined by momentary needs and desires, in other words, as subject. Very young children are embedded in their needs and desires. Older children can see needs and desires as object, as things separate from themselves, things which they can look at consciously. Older children also develop a “durable category” (Kegan, 1994, p. 25) of self, consisting of their preferences, habits, and abilities, all aspects that they can regard as object. Part of the work of the adolescent, or the hidden curriculum of the culture, as Kegan calls it, is to move toward seeing the durable category of self as object and in mutual relationship to the selves of others.

Unfortunately, the words subject and object can be confusing because the words are used differently in other contexts. Some people I have talked to about these concepts have assumed that I was using them as Freire (1970) did. For Freire, “subjects” are “those who know and act” while “objects” are “those which are known and acted upon” (p. 20). The goal of Freire’s pedagogy is to move people from being objects, those oppressed by societal forces, to subjects, those who act to influence their worlds. Freire’s use of the words is related to their use in the language of grammar, with subject meaning agent and

object meaning receiver, or that which is acted upon. Kegan's use of the words is very different.

Kegan's use of subject and object is related to the common meanings of subjectivity and objectivity. In Kegan's theory (1994), when a person is subject to an experience, she lives it, experiences it, but does not see it as something over which she has control or for which she has responsibility. When a person can see an experience as object, she can examine it, look at it from multiple perspectives, reflect on it, decide what meaning it has for her, and understand to what extent she has control over or responsibility for it.

The association of Kegan's use of the terms subject and object with subjectivity and objectivity gave me pause as I grappled with his theory. Subjectivity is often associated with women's ways of interacting with the world and devalued, while objectivity is more often associated with male perspectives and privileged over subjectivity. As I understand his work, Kegan does not mean that emotions are inferior to objective stances; rather, he says that in order to meet the demands of modern life, people develop more effective stances in which they move back and forth between feeling the emotions an experience engenders (subject) and making meaning of that experience in their lives (object).

Implications for This Study

What I have looked for in the data is how students make meaning of the experiences of their lives. Some of them were still feeling the emotion of some of the experiences of their lives, but were unable to articulate the meaning of those experiences. They remained perplexed and at the mercy of the emotions. Others students, or the same students in relationship to other experiences, recalled the emotions and had reflected on the meaning that experience held for them at the time of the study. I have also looked for

instances when students attribute their ability to make new meaning to their first-semester college experience.

In this study, I did not use Kegan's theory to label students as being at a particular stage. I did not have enough data from each student. I knew it would be unlikely that I could observe or document full shifts from one stage to another within one semester. However, with the lens of subject-object theory, I was able to observe and document shifts in some students' thinking on some aspects of their lives and learning. What is more, I was able to link those shifts to course activities or characteristics of the classroom environment.

Baxter Magolda and Self-Authorship

Baxter Magolda (1992, 1999, 2001) builds on the work of Kegan (1982, 1994) to describe another framework for understanding the epistemological, identity, and social development of young adults. She also draws on the work of Belenkey et al. (1997/1986) as she differentiates what she calls gender-related patterns of knowing. Baxter Magolda's theories are based on a longitudinal study of the self-reported experiences of young adults from age 18 to their early 30s. Starting with 101 college freshman in 1986, she interviewed the students yearly. She continued the interviews after college with 39 participants.

Baxter Magolda's first book reporting the study (1992) detailed her framework of epistemological development in college students. Her framework adds to our understanding of the transition in the college years from a dualistic view of knowledge to what she calls self-authorship. She identifies Absolute Knowing, Transitional Knowing, Independent Knowing, and Contextual Knowing as markers along the path of intellectual development. She makes the additional contribution of identifying 2 patterns of knowing, relational and impersonal, the preference for which was gender-related. People who used the relational pattern, more often female than male, tended to learn through "connection and getting inside the object of knowing" (2001, p. 18). People who used the impersonal

pattern, more often male than female, tended to learn through “separation or detachment” (2001, p. 18).

In her later work, Baxter Magolda (2001) reported understanding that she had focused too exclusively on the epistemological development of students and had neglected the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of the path to self-authorship. Belenkey et al. (1997/1986) said academic institutions, with their emphasis on objectivity, often teach a “weeding out of self” (p. 136). In her work on supportive educational environments, Baxter Magolda (1999, 2001) argues for fostering student growth in all three dimensions and makes explicit connections between epistemology, identity, and relationships. She describes how the dimensions are interrelated. Identity is formed and reformed by challenges from the external environment. Relationships with others are influenced by a person's internal sense of self, and relationships with others can influence the sense of self. An altered sense of self can affect belief about one's capability of questioning authority and creating knowledge. And a belief in one's capability to question authority and create knowledge brings with it an altered sense of self and new perspectives on interpersonal relationships.

The focus of Baxter Magolda's work is how higher education can support young adults, or borrowing a metaphor from Kegan, “provide good company” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xvi) for them on their path toward self-authorship. The concept of self-authorship comes from Kegan's (1994) work. Baxter Magolda (2001), using Perry's concept of dualism, Kegan's framework, and her interviews with college students, depicted college students on a path toward self-authorship. The college students in her studies moved from a dualistic view of knowledge to a recognition that knowledge is uncertain. Using Kegan's orders of consciousness, she described most college students as being dependent on external influences—for example, the ideas and needs of others—to construct their beliefs,

identity, and interpersonal relationships. She described a few of the college students in her study as making the transition to self-authorship during the college years.

The capacity for self-authorship is “the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments” (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Baxter Magolda explained that self-authorship does not mean self-centered in the sense of ignoring the needs of others. Instead it means the capability of using internal self-definition to make decisions about beliefs and relationships with others. Kegan (1994) used self-authorship as a descriptor of his fourth order of consciousness:

This new whole is an ideology, an internal identity, a *self-authorship* that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states. It is no longer *authored by* them, it *authors them* and thereby achieves a personal authority. (p. 185)

Three questions emerged from Baxter Magolda's (2001) interviews with young adults in the post-college years as the “driving questions of the twenties”: How do I know? Who am I? What kinds of relationships do I want to construct with others? (p. 4): The three questions map to the areas of development identified by constructive developmental psychology: epistemology, identity, and relationship. Baxter Magolda (2001) calls them the three dimensions of self-authorship: the epistemological, the intrapersonal, and the interpersonal.

Further Implications for This Study

The goal of this study is not to place students at a position on any of the frameworks developed by Perry, Belenkey et al., Kegan, or Baxter Magolda. Students do not show unambiguous progress from one position to another within the course of a semester. The data do, however, provide evidence of students' ways of knowing, their descriptions of their selves, and their relationships with others, and sometimes changes in those areas. The teachers describe ways in which they want to see their students develop

in these three areas. They implement classroom environments and activities that support learning and change in these three areas. The data show some students do shift the way they view learning and themselves in some ways. These shifts can be linked at least in part to experiences in the classroom environment during their first semester in college. The frameworks developed by the constructive developmental psychologists inform data analysis. This study adds to the body of research by describing an example of how teaching and classroom environments support first-year developmental studies students as they begin to define themselves as college students.

What is most helpful for this study about Baxter Magolda's work is that she examines what happens in educational contexts and describes educational environments that support and promote students' development in these three dimensions. In the next section, I summarize her ideas about supportive educational contexts, along with ideas from Kegan, and relate them to my study.

Characteristics of Learning Environments for Fostering Identity Development

This study describes the learning environment created by 2 teachers working with first-semester community college students in 2 developmental reading and writing classrooms. In the analysis I look for ways in which the teachers support the epistemological, identity, and interpersonal development of the students. In this section, I summarize Baxter Magolda's (2001) description of learning environments for fostering identity development. Possible metaphors for describing the learning environment and the teacher's role follow.

Baxter Magolda's Three Principles

Baxter Magolda (2001) outlined the educational assumptions implicit in an educational goal of promoting self-authorship:

- Knowledge is complex and socially constructed.

- Self is central to knowledge construction.
- Expertise is shared mutually in knowledge construction. (p. 188)

She then identified three principles to connect these assumptions to teaching practice. In the interviews with teachers in my study, classroom observations, and analysis of assignments, evidence emerges of adherence to these three principles:

- Validate learners as knowers.
- Situate learning in learners' experience.
- Define learning as mutually constructing meaning. (p. 188)

Baxter Magolda's research (2001) found that most students had not made their way to self-authorship during their college years, that not until finishing college, beginning their professional lives, and making decisions about important interpersonal relationships did they find their ways to self-authorship. However, she asserts that their complex post-graduate lives would have been easier if they had experienced environments more supportive of their epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal growth during their college years.

Metaphors for Teaching Practice

Grubb & Cox (2005) discussed the problems that arise when teachers hold views of the nature of learning and knowledge different from those their students hold. They believe that community college teachers know a lot about the stresses students experience in their lives outside of the college, but that they know little about how their students view learning. They found that the majority of community college students viewed learning as a means to a degree or certificate, which leads to better paying jobs than their parents had, and which offers a way out of poverty. Student interviews for my study strongly support Grubb and Cox on this point. Cox (2004) found that students wanted to learn what they could use. If they could not see the application of learning to their lives, then they might be willing to learn just enough to pass a course in order to earn the degree or certificate that

will get them a better job. Many instructors, however, want learners to be engaged and interested in knowledge for its own sake. Many want students to go beyond the regurgitation of facts, to think critically and to engage in discussion (Grubb & Cox, 2005). Cox (2004) found that many students in her study preferred lecture to more innovative instruction, possibly because it fit their instrumental view of learning.

Simply exhorting students to view learning differently is not very effective. As Baxter Magolda (1999) said, it is not enough for the teacher to shout across the border (p. 61). Grubb and Cox (2005) suggest that effective teachers "socialize" students to another view of learning (p. 98). I have searched for metaphors for the teacher's role in creating a learning environment for community college students in developmental education that fosters the development of an identity as a college student. I have not found any metaphors that are completely satisfying, but several have been suggested by theorists who use the theoretical frameworks described above.

Kegan (1994) wrote about coaching the curriculum of the next order of consciousness. As an example of coaching the cultural curriculum of adolescence, Kegan described a teacher who "engages students where they are" by asking them for their personal opinions about a topic, but then also "invite[s] them to step beyond the limit" of their current order of consciousness by asking them to restate the opinions of their classmates until the classmates agree that their opinions have been reflected accurately (p. 55). In this way, the adolescent may begin to learn to see his own opinions in mutual relationship to the opinions of others. In addition, Kegan (1982) wrote about a culture of embeddedness, which at any order of consciousness acts as a holding environment, simultaneously holding the person safely and providing the chance for movement to the next order of consciousness. Kegan (1994) also used a bridge metaphor:

[Teachers should create] a holding environment that provides welcoming acknowledgment to exactly who the person is right now as he or she is, and fosters the person's psychological evolution. As such, a holding environment is a tricky, transitional culture, an evolutionary bridge, a context for crossing over. (p. 43)

With an understanding of students' current epistemological stances, teachers can work to create a learning environment in which students are both supported where they are and challenged to expand their views of how they know about the world around them.

In more recent work applied to adults in work environments, Kegan and Lahey (2001) proposed a model of development in which adults examine and test assumptions about the world that are holding them back. When learners experience enough counterinstances of their assumptions, they can let go of them and begin to see the world in new ways.

Baxter Magolda suggested two metaphors. From Giroux (1992), she borrowed the idea of crossing borders (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Students and teachers live in different worlds in terms of their perceptions of learning. The teacher's task is to start with the students on their side of the border and cross into the other world along with the student. Baxter Magolda (2001) and Kegan (1994) also compared students' progress to self-authorship to a journey. The educators' role is to travel along on the journey and provide good company.

Finding adequate metaphors may be difficult, but implementing the supportive role they attempt to describe is much harder. This study describes in some detail how 2 teachers interacted with the students in their developmental reading and writing classes and built an environment that supported change in students' views of the nature of learning and knowledge and their developing identities as college students.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Purpose of the Study

This study has purposes related to both theory and practice. On the theoretical plane, it explores connections between learning and identity. On the practical plane, it describes in detail the practice of 2 teachers working with 2 groups of students for 1 semester, teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, observed classroom practices, and students' perceptions of learning and change. The purpose of the study is not to measure student learning, or to make a judgment about the effectiveness of a particular approach, but to describe students' perceptions of what they learned and their perceptions of themselves in relationship to college and learning. As a program coordinator, I was looking for implications for program design to support the work and learning of teachers and students.

Research Questions

The research questions address 3 areas: students' perceptions of their experience, teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and the classroom environments they created with students. The research questions are as follows:

- How do students in two developmental education learning community classes perceive themselves in relationship to college, learning, and career goals at the beginning and end of the semester?
- What beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning do the teachers of the two sections espouse?
- How do the teachers implement those beliefs in the classroom?

Research Design

The design of this qualitative study includes aspects of phenomenology, ethnography, and action research. Because two of the research questions in the study concern the perceptions of students and teachers, this is a phenomenological study, that is, one which "describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). The concepts of interest in this study are learning and identity, and the phenomenon of interest is the first-semester community college experiences of students enrolled in an accelerated developmental education learning community and their teachers. Phenomenological studies come from the scholarly traditions of psychology, philosophy, and sociology (Creswell, 1998). In line with the phenomenological aspect of the study, in-depth interviews with students and teachers are important sources of data. The theoretical framework of the study includes the work of developmental psychologists (Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2001). An interview method (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix (1988) designed for their work fits the goals of this study.

While this study does not fit the definition of an ethnographic study in all of its aspects, I used methods from ethnography to triangulate the data from in-depth interviews. Cresswell (1998) defines ethnography as "a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system" (p. 58). The social group in this study is a relatively short-lived one, existing in this particular configuration for just one semester. The social group consists of the first-semester students in the accelerated developmental education reading and writing courses, along with the teachers of their courses, the program coordinator, and the adviser assigned to the program. The social group is nested within the community college, which is part of a state system of community colleges. Ethnographic methods employed in the study include participant observation of class sessions, teachers' meetings, and out-of-class

activities, as well as the recording of field notes from these observations. I also collected and analyzed artifacts, including student writing, teacher's lesson plans and assignment sheets, readings, textbooks, and diagrams and charts used in the classroom.

This study was, in some respects, also an action research study. I was the coordinator of the accelerated developmental education program of which the classes in the study were a part and looking for ways to improve my practice as a program administrator. An action research model allows the researcher to try out strategies, pay attention to their effects and then modify program approaches based on observations (Edge, 2001). I was interested in improving my practice, as mentor and coach for the 6 teachers and adviser in the program. I was thinking about how what I observed in the classroom and learned from students might influence my work with other teachers and administrators, and how what I learned might be used to affect program design for developmental education. I discussed beliefs about teaching and learning with the teachers in the study, and shared with students some advice about learning and negotiating college systems, so that my beliefs and my research interests had some influence on the teachers and students in the study.

Community College Research Site

The community college where the study was conducted is located on the same urban campus as a 4-year college and a university. According to the college's annual report, in the 2004-2005 academic year, 14,553 full and part-time students were enrolled at the community college. The college prides itself on serving a diverse student body. According to the same annual report, 56% of students were minority, making it the most diverse institution of higher education in the state. Student ethnicity distribution was 43% White, 27% Latino/Hispanic, 15% African-American, 7% international students, and 5% Asian/Pacific Islander. For more than 23% of students, a language other than English is

the first language. The college received national recognition for its improvement of minority student graduation rates over the last 15 years. According to the 2003-2004 Annual Report, while in 1991 people of color made up just 20 per cent of the college's graduates, by 2003 that percentage increased to 53 percent, approximately equal to the percentage of people of color in the student population.

Statistics reflecting educational background, economic status, and academic preparedness are relevant for this study. Fifty-seven percent of the college's students are among the first generation of their families to attend college, and nearly 50 percent qualify for federal financial aid awards based on need. (Community College of Denver, 2004). Of all students who enrolled for the first time at the college in the 2005-2006 academic year, 55% of the students were required to enroll in developmental math, reading, English, English as a Second Language (ESL), or GED preparation (Wiens & Brancard, 2007). Of those who needed developmental coursework, in math, reading or English, as determined by scores on the Accuplacer test, 78% needed 2 or more levels of coursework, meaning 2 or more semesters of work in developmental education courses.

A student who is required to take developmental courses at community colleges in this state is one who tests below pre-determined cut-off scores on 4 subtests of the Accuplacer test, a computer-adaptive, multiple-choice test developed by the College Board to test college readiness of students in reading, math, and English composition. The test is used at most community colleges in this state and at hundreds of institutions across the country. All degree-seeking students in the state's community colleges are required to test on the Accuplacer or a similar test if they score below prescribed scores on the ACT test. Students who test below prescribed test scores on the tests of reading, writing, and math skills are required by state law to complete developmental course work in math and English before taking College Algebra and Freshman Composition. At the community

college in the study, many programs and courses have set Accuplacer scores or developmental course completion pre-requisites. For the most part, college personnel talk about the test as a placement test and do not use the words pass or fail in referring to students' test results.

Program Context

The students in the study were enrolled in a grant-supported special program called FastStart in its third semester of operation. FastStart students are enrolled in two levels of developmental coursework, either two levels of math or two levels of reading/English, as well as a 1-credit-hour college orientation course. FastStart, is designed to address the instructional needs of young, working adults who test into developmental courses in reading, math, and English. The program is organized to provide students with the opportunity to move more quickly toward their education goals in a supportive and challenging environment and in doing so to increase the likelihood that students will complete a degree or vocational certificate. The program makes it possible for students to accelerate their movement through the developmental course sequence, completing 2 levels of developmental coursework in 1 semester instead of 2. In addition, the program strives to reduce the social isolation often characteristic of commuter campuses and orient first-year students to the college environment on a schedule that is compatible with their job and family obligations.

The FastStart team includes a program coordinator, course instructors, a program adviser, and student ambassadors. I serve as program coordinator. Sara and Linda are the two Reading/English instructors. The principal investigator for one of the grants plays an important advisory role. At the time of the study, 4 math instructors and 1 student services staff person made up the rest of the instructional team. Courses in the program are taught by experienced part-time faculty who are interested in the challenge of working in an

experimental program. In addition to compensation for teaching the classes, part-time faculty are paid for participation in staff meetings and professional development activities, and for curriculum development work. These benefits and responsibilities are not part of most part-time faculty assignments at the college. FastStart staff meetings are held once a month. Topics at staff meetings include concerns about individual students, logistical issues, curricular and pedagogical concerns and adjustments, and discussion of student feedback and outcome data.

The program adviser, whose official title is educational specialist, is responsible for recruiting and advising students in the program. The educational specialist takes a proactive approach to advising instead of a reactive one. She does not wait for students to contact her with questions. She contacts students to give information and assistance regarding tutoring, registration, financial aid, educational planning, and college events. She observes classes frequently, participating in some class activities, and plans a small number of social events for students. She maintains close contact with instructors so that if problems arise with students' academic work, class participation, or attendance, she can talk with students to help them identify ways of coping with the problems. She also coordinates a small group of 3 student ambassadors, university undergraduate work study students who act as her assistants. They assist the educational specialist, maintain contact with students, and sometimes attend classes with the students and tutor students.

Building on research that shows first-year students who participate in learning communities are retained in subsequent semesters at higher rates than other students (Price, 2005; Tinto, 1993, 1997), cohort learning is an important element of FastStart. Students spend more extended time with each other and their instructor than they would if they took the developmental course sequences in the traditional program, allowing them the opportunity to develop closer relationships. Instructors are encouraged to use

instructional strategies that incorporate community building, active learning, and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Instructors are working to teach reading, writing, and math skills in contexts that are meaningful to students.

The Course Sections in the Study

The study included the only two sections of combined reading and English composition in the FastStart program in the semester of the study, but no math sections. The decision to concentrate on reading and writing classes had to do with my personal expertise as a reading and writing teacher and limitations of time. The reading and writing instructors had also been better able to incorporate community building, interactive learning, and meaningful contexts for skills application than had the math instructors. I was especially interested in observing the influence of those practices on students' perceptions of themselves and of learning.

Instruction in developmental reading and English composition, taught in separate courses in the traditional developmental education program, is integrated into 1 class with 1 instructor in FastStart. The college offers 3 levels of developmental reading and 3 levels of developmental composition. All of the students in the study courses tested into the intermediate levels of both reading and writing on the basis of Accuplacer scores. Upon successful completion of course requirements with a grade of C or better during the semester of the study, students had completed all of the developmental sequence in both reading and composition. In passing the FastStart course, students could register for the freshman composition course required for most degrees and for other reading-intensive courses in the semester following the study. Some students still needed to take some developmental math courses, but they would be able to start courses that counted toward degree completion.

The two FastStart reading and writing sections in the semester of the study were taught by Sara and Linda. Sara taught the 16 students enrolled in the Monday-Wednesday morning section of the course, and Linda taught 15 students in the Tuesday-Thursday section. The students had chosen to enroll in the accelerated program after discussion with the program adviser about whether the workload allowed them to meet other commitments in their lives. The classes met for 3-hour periods 2 mornings per week for 15 weeks. In addition to the full-class sessions, about half of the students were enrolled in a 1-credit-hour college orientation course. A few of the students were enrolled in an additional developmental math course outside of the FastStart program. Students could take advantage of multiple opportunities for instructional support outside of class time. Teachers in each section also planned small group, whole class, or individual conferences for an additional hour per week. Four workshops on the subject of career exploration were offered outside of class hours, and some of the students attended those sessions. Students spent between 6 to 8 hours together each week in program-organized sessions.

Research Participants

The Students

Of the 31 students enrolled in the two course sections, 27 consented to participate in the study by being included in class observation data, 26 consented to the inclusion of their written work in the study, and 23 agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews with me.

In several ways, the students did not represent a cross-section of the community college's enrollment. The study group was more balanced in gender, younger, more heavily Hispanic and had a higher percentage of foreign-born students than the general population of students at this community college. Thirteen of the students in the study were male and 14 were female. Twenty of the 27 students were recent high school graduates,

18 having graduated in spring of the same year in which the study took place, 2 having finished high school the previous spring. These 20 students were between 18 and 20 years old. The other 7 students ranged in age from 21 to 34. Of this older group of students, 2 of the students finished high school in another country, 3 graduated from a U.S. high school, and 2 had earned GEDs. Seventeen of the 27 students were Hispanic, 3 were African-Americans, 3 were immigrants from Asia, 2 were White-Anglo, and 2 were immigrants from Africa. (See Table 3.1 on the next page.)

While all but 2 students in the study graduated from a high school or earned a GED in the U.S., over half of the group was born in another country and moved to the U.S. as young children or adolescents. Fifteen of the students were foreign born: 10 students in Mexico, 2 students in Vietnam, one each in the Philippines, Somalia, and Ghana. The other 12 students were born in the U.S. Nineteen of the students reported being bilingual, or, in the case of the African students, fluent in 3 languages. Seven of the students had been living in the U.S for 4 or fewer years, 3 of them for fewer than 2 years.

A large percentage of the students had work and family responsibilities outside of school. Most of the students were single. However, 5 of the women in the classes were mothers. One of the 5 was a single mother; another's husband was stationed in Iraq. An additional single student was pregnant and expecting her first child in February. Many of the single students lived with their parents and contributed to the family income. At the beginning of the study, 2 students reported working full-time, 15 had part-time jobs, and 10 were unemployed. Table 3.1 on the next page links student names to key demographic information.

Table 3.1 Student demographic information

Student Name	Country of birth/Ethnicity	Time in the U.S.	Gender	Age	Graduated U.S. High School?
Adrienne	U.S./Afr.-Am.		f	19	yes
Alex	Mexico		m	19	yes
Angela	Philippines	4. 5 yrs.	f	23	no
Anh	Vietnam	3 yrs.	f	19	yes
Armando	Mexico	11 yrs.	m	18	yes
Carlos	Mexico	11 yrs.	m	18	yes
Carmen	U.S./Hispanic		f	19	yes
Charlayne	U.S./Afr.-Am.		f	34	yes
Chilese	U.S./White		f	19	yes
Cristina	U.S./Hispanic	elementary school yrs. split bet. U.S. & Mexico	f	18	yes
Dave	U.S./White		m	19	yes
Eddie	Mexico	4 yrs.	m	18	yes
Elena	U.S./White		f	23	yes
Isabel	Mexico	13 yrs.	f	18	yes
Javier	Mexico	18 mo.	m	19	yes
Jimmy	U.S./Hispanic		m	34	GED
Jose	U.S./Hispanic		m	19	yes
Laura	U.S./Hispanic		f	18	yes
Laurence	Mexico	16 yrs.	m	18	yes
Lydia	Mexico	2 yrs.	f	19	yes
Melissa	U.S./Hispanic		f	32	GED
Michael	U.S./Afr.-Am.		m	22	yes
Omar	Somalia	4 yrs.	m	19	yes
Roberto	Mexico	7 yrs.	m	19	yes
Rosa	Mexico	2 yrs.	f	18	yes
Ruby	Ghana	5 mo.	f	21	no
Tam	Vietnam	2.75 yrs.	m	19	yes

The Teachers

Sara and Linda, the two teachers in the study, had been adjunct faculty members in the developmental reading program for several semesters before being asked and deciding to teach in the FastStart program. Linda had taught for 2 semesters in FastStart prior to the study. For Sara, the study semester was the first semester teaching in the FastStart program. Both are part-time faculty members in the developmental reading

program. For more detailed descriptions of Sara and Linda and their thoughts about being involved in the study, see Chapter 5.

The Researcher

My role in the study was a dual one—that of researcher and coordinator of the program that included the classes in the study. Herr and Anderson (2005) describe this positionality as that of an insider with the collaboration of other insiders. The teachers were both subjects of the research and partners in it.

I was the immediate supervisor of the teachers in the study, a fact that had the potential for conflict. While I supervised the teachers during the time of the study, their employment was not contingent on participation in the study. Had they decided not to participate, they could have taught other classes outside my supervision.

The nature of the study helped to reduce teachers' fears and the potential for conflict. The research questions for the study are not comparative. Practices are not being compared as more effective than others, the teachers were not compared for their effectiveness, and students' learning was not evaluated against a particular benchmark. Instead, the study describes students' learning and teacher's beliefs and practices, as well as the classroom environment. My on-going discussions with the teachers about their participation in the study and the study's parameters are described in some detail in Chapter 5.

My role as program coordinator was to provide leadership to the team, act as liaison between the FastStart classes and the developmental education program chairs and dean, facilitate scheduling and recruitment, write grant reports, attend meetings with the funding agency, and participate in the quantitative research project that was part of the grant project. All of the program teachers often discussed ideas for teaching, problems with students, and successes in their teaching with me. I observed all of the classes at least

once during the semester. The work with Linda and Sara was a more intensive version of the work I did with all of the teachers in the program

In my role as program coordinator, I had only a little direct contact with students. Occasionally, I met with students if there were problems that could not be resolved by the program adviser or teachers. I gave a short presentation at the orientation for students before the semester began. Because my work was mainly invisible to students, they did not seem to regard me as an authority figure during my classroom observations. I think they saw me in my role as researcher more than in the role as coordinator. As the semester progressed, students seemed to accept me as a part of the group, someone who could sometimes help out with their writing or who might have something to offer to the discussion. After the first round of interviews, a few students who had not agreed to interviews at the beginning said they would like to participate in interviews, indicating, I think, more comfort with my presence and the idea of being interviewed.

In the interviews, a few students commented that I had offered words of encouragement or that they enjoyed talking with me. Having the chance to participate in the interview provided the students with another chance to narrate and reflect on their own experience and did perhaps influence their learning in a small way. However, when students talked about what they thought brought about changes in themselves and their learning, they never talked about the interviews with me. One of the teachers thought that my presence in the classroom, the interviews, and the fact that students were participating in a research study may have had a positive influence on the students' sense that they were important and being taken seriously.

Data Collection

Data were collected from student and teacher interviews, classroom observations, meetings with teachers, informal conversations with teachers and students, student writing, and an activity assessment instrument designed by the researcher and teachers.

Student Interviews

Twenty-three students agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews. In the end, because of time limitations, both mine and the students', I was able to interview 21 students, 10 of them twice and the other 11 once. I conducted a total of 31 student interviews. (See Table 3.2 below.) The interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 1 ½ hours, with the average time about 1 hour. I recorded the interviews using a digital recorder. All of the interviews were transcribed and imported into NVIVO for coding.

Table 3.2 Student interviews

Students from Linda's Class	Beginning of Semester Interview	End of Semester Interview	Students from Sara's Class	Beginning of Semester Interview	End of Semester Interview
Alex		X	Angela	X	
Armando	X		Anh	X	X
Carmen		X	Carlos	X	X
Charlayne	X	X	Cristina		X
Jimmy	X	X	Dave	X	
Laura	X	X	Eddie		X
Laurence	X		Javier	X	X
Michael	X	X	Lydia	X	X
Omar		X	Roberto	X	X
Rosa	X	X	Tam	X	
Ruby	X				
Totals	8	8		8	7
Total beginning of semester interviews					16
Total end of semester interviews					15
Total student interviews conducted					31
Total number of students interviewed					21

I used a variation of the subject-object interview devised by Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix (1988) to elicit narrative data from interviewees. (See Appendix

A for the full Student Interview Protocol.) In the first interview at the beginning of the semester, I asked students to think of experiences they had in the past related to education and learning, inside or outside of school. I gave the interviewee 10 5-inch by 7-inch cards with the one of the following prompts written on each card: *angry, anxious/nervous, successful/proud, standing up for your beliefs, sad, confused, moved/touched by heart, lost something, change, important to me*. For the second interview at the end of the semester, I asked students to use the same prompts to reflect on their experience during the semester. I added 1 card for the second interview with the prompt *surprising/unexpected* because I had found in previous work with students that this prompt often elicited reports of changes in students' perceptions.

I told the interviewees that they had 15 to 20 minutes to think about each card and make notes about an experience the card made them think about, that the cards were theirs to keep, and that I would not be reading them. Students usually spent 5 to 10 minutes thinking and making notes on the cards. When students were ready to talk, they chose the card they wanted to talk about first. They chose which cards to talk about and which not to talk about.

During the interview, I tried to balance two roles—that of active, sympathetic listener and that of active inquirer. As an active listener, I let the student know that I understood and sympathized. As an inquirer, I used questions intended to lead the student to articulate what sort of meaning the student had made of that experience in his or her life.

In the first interview most students talked about their high school experience, their families' roles in their education, and why they wanted to go to college. In the second interview, students talked about the experience of the first semester in college, how they thought they had changed, their career and education plans, and how they felt as they looked forward to the next semester.

Using this protocol for student interviews had some advantages over using direct questions. Themes emerged from the students instead of from me. For example, the theme of family members' influence on education plans came from students. I never asked students directly what role their families played in their education plans. Students directed my attention to aspects of their experience, instead of my directing theirs, as would have been the case with direct questions. Because of this, I have more confidence that the themes that emerged are truly the students'.

Using this protocol also encouraged students to ground their generalizations in experience. Some of the students had a tendency to jump to generalization. For example, with the important to me card, students often started with a list of what was important to them, like their families and getting an education. I reminded them to give me an example of an experience that helped them to realize those things were important to them. Asking for the experience yielded richer narratives.

A disadvantage of the protocol was that not every student talked about all of the themes. The fact that students did not talk about a particular theme does not mean they had no experience with it or nothing to say about it. For example, 3 of the students in the end-of-semester interviews talked about changes in their ideas about the importance of asking questions. Because I did not ask all of the students about the importance of asking questions, I cannot say that more of the students did or did not learn about asking questions. What I do know from the classroom observations is that far more than the three students who brought up the topic of asking questions asked many questions in class, so I can reasonably conclude that the classroom environment encouraged most students to ask questions. I used other data sources—the classroom observations, teachers' observations, and student writing—to triangulate and augment the interview data. However, I cannot describe learning and change quantitatively. In most cases, I cannot say what percentage

of students changed in a particular way because I did not use a method that asked all students to respond to the same questions.

Classroom Observations

I spent approximately 48 hours as a participant observer in the two classrooms. Each class met for 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours a day, two days a week for 15 weeks. I was in Linda's class on 11 days and in Sara's class on 14 days, spending between 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours and 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours each day. On some days I was a silent observer, but I also participated in some discussions, helped conduct writer's workshops, substituted for Linda for one class period, and worked with individuals and small groups of students. I took extensive field notes during class. Upon reviewing the field notes, I prepared coversheets for each session's field notes with summary headings and comments.

Teacher Interviews and Meetings

I conducted 3 recorded interviews with the teachers. In the first interview, at the beginning of the semester, the three of us talked about our beliefs about teaching and learning and our hopes, fears, and expectations about the upcoming semester and research project. After the semester ended, I conducted separate interviews with each of the teachers using the Lahey, et al. (1988) protocol and asking the teachers to reflect on their experience during the semester. In addition to the recorded interviews, I have field notes from 10 1-hour discussions conducted nearly weekly during which the three of us discussed our work with the 2 classes. Other field notes documented informal discussions with each of the teachers. I also archived e-mails and hand-written notes from and to the teachers. Recorded interviews were transcribed for coding.

Student Writing

For each of the students who agreed to have their writing be part of the study, I have multiple pieces of writing. From the students in Sara's class, I read students' finished

“My Life” essays or early drafts of the essays and the final career exploration report. In addition, I collected students' weekly reading response homework, bookstore visit responses, the rubrics for their essays, and a midterm test. For the students in Linda's class, I had 8 pieces of writing including a career exploration essay, a reflective piece about the process of completing the career exploration project, a piece about their personal schedule and use of time, an essay titled “Back to the Future,” and other pieces assessing their own learning. The final assessment letter, which they addressed to Linda, was especially helpful in documenting how students articulated their perceptions of learning and change.

Activity Assessment Forms

Students in both classes filled out a Learning Activity Assessment at the end of the semester. Sara and Linda listed the activities from each of their classes on the form. Students assessed each activity on Likert scales in 5 domains: helpful in preparing me for college classes, interesting and engaging, helped me understand myself better, helped me understand and respect other students, and helped me gain confidence. Students rated the activities in each domain on a Likert scale with 1 being not helpful at all and 5 being extremely helpful. Students could choose 0 if they did not know how the activity helped them or if they did not participate.

Data Analysis

As I transcribed student interviews, I wrote memos about each interview, describing the student's physical appearance, demeanor and other affective aspects of the student during the interview and summarizing content on topics the student decided to talk about.

All interview transcripts including the teacher interviews were imported into NVIVO. I coded the interview transcripts inductively, assigning codes based on content of sections

of the interviews, using a process sometimes called constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). If a section from a subsequent interview fit any code that I had already created, I coded it according to that code. If not, I created a new code for it. Coded chunks ranged in length from 1 or 2 sentences to several sentences. The same piece of a transcribed interview was often coded in 2 or more ways. As codes accumulated, I began to group them in categories and sub-categories, using the Tree Nodes tool in NVIVO. (See Appendix B Excerpt from NVIVO Tree Nodes.)

Some coded material did not fit into the emergent tree structure of categorized codes. This material was coded in Free Nodes in NVIVO. I also read the interview transcripts with an eye to whether the student took a subject or object stance to a particular experience. I classified those pieces of the interviews under a "Subject" or "Object" code using the Free Nodes tool in NVIVO.

I used the Tree Nodes codes to identify themes and patterns in the interview data. As I identified codes and themes, I read through the interview transcripts several times to see how I might code the interviews differently and how portions of interviews might support or provide counter-examples to identified themes.

Student writing and field notes were used to provide additional evidence and description of identified themes, additional themes, and counter evidence of themes. The student writing, field notes from observations and informal conversations, as well as the activity assessment forms served to triangulate the identification of themes and subsequent findings.

Presentation of Findings

I was influenced in the writing of this study by Wolcott (1990) to include detailed description in the findings and numerous quotations from students and teachers. Wolcott suggests thinking of descriptive sections of the qualitative dissertation as "subtle analysis"

and the more heavily interpretive and analytical sections as “intrusive” analysis (p. 29). Wolcott comments that the descriptive account of a qualitative study is “likely to constitute the most important contribution” the researcher can make (p. 27). I have chosen to weave description and analysis together in order to let the students and teachers speak for themselves. My analysis is evident in the identification of themes, the selection and interpretation of students’ and teachers’ stories and actions, in the final chapter, “Discussion and Summary.”

The themes identified through coding are woven into a narrative that reflects the proleptic nature (Rogoff, 1995; Wenger, 1998) of learning and identity negotiation. The past, present, and future are intertwined in the telling of the stories of these students and teachers. In Chapters 4 and 5, students look back at their experience in high school and forward to the unfolding first semester in college. In Chapter 6, “The Teachers,” Sara and Linda talk about the beliefs about teaching and learning that they bring to the semester. In Chapter 7, “The Class,” I describe the shared experience of teachers, students, and researcher during the semester. In Chapter 7, “Emerging College Student Identities,” the students once again look back at their experience during the semester and forward to the next.

CHAPTER 4

LOOKING BACK AT HIGH SCHOOL

From the vantage point of the beginning of the semester of their first year in college, students looked backward at their previous educational experiences and forward to a future that held both hopes and fears. In this chapter drawing mainly on students' beginning of the semester interviews, I describe students' reports of their high school experience. While high school was not the focus of the study, these stories provide insight into who these students are as they arrive in the college classroom on the first day of class. High school graduation marked an accomplishment in which many students looked back with pride. Students recounted formative experiences. For the students who came to the U.S. during their high school years, learning English and a new culture were salient accomplishments. Family, adults in the high school, and peers played important roles in the stories students told of their high school years.

High School Graduation: A Proud Moment

When I interviewed students at the beginning of the semester, I asked them to recount experiences related to learning and education from their past that they associated with the emotions or reactions written on 10 cards. In response to the proud/successful card, 8 of the 16 students who talked to me about their experiences in high school, recounted the pride they felt on graduating from high school. Angela recalled graduation night when she was named a "Soaring Eagle," her school's designation for honor students:

My graduation was one of the most happiest days of my life because we were all sitting—our graduation was in the coliseum, so we were sitting—and the principal was like, "It's time to call the Soaring Eagles." I wasn't the top, top girl; I was like in the 20's. They called my name and I was so proud of myself. The day before that, they gave us . . . some other awards we got. So those two days were so happy and I was so proud of myself.

Angela, Lydia, and Michael all noted that they had been the first in their families to finish high school and that was a source of pride for them. Lydia, who had immigrated with her family from Mexico just 2 years before, recounted:

It makes me feel proud because my parents—they couldn't go to college, even to middle school. My mom didn't finish elementary school and my dad he didn't finish the middle school, and then when my brothers and me were growing up, my older sister didn't finish middle school, and I feel like sad because she got married, and, I don't know, her life is so difficult.

Lydia saw finishing high school as a step toward college, a step toward independence and self-sufficiency:

I feel proud of me because I could do it, graduate from high school. And another thing is that I start college. It makes me feel so so proud because it means to me that I can do whatever I want. Those are the two things that make me feel so proud. . . . I want to go to college because what about if I have a husband and he treats me bad? Well, I'm not gonna depend on him anymore. So if I got a bad situation with my husband or something like that, I can depend on me.

Michael, whose relationship with his parents was a troubled one, was defiantly proud of his graduation from high school 5 years before the study began. He was proud despite his belief that graduating meant that members of his family perceived him as a “geek” or “nerd.” When I asked him to explain what it was about finishing high school that made him proud, he elaborated:

Just actually finishing school, just being able to say, I have a diploma. I mean if you look at most of my family, like, how many have graduated? Who has a diploma? And they're all just like, uhhhh, uhhh. I mean it's like a blank stare. Nobody knows anything. Yeah, I mean, you can call me a geek, you can call me a professor, you can call me whatever you want to call me, but at the end of the day, I know that I finished school, and when somebody asks me for my diploma, I have a piece of paper to show them. . . . [People say,] well, you're geeky. You know that, you're a geek, you're a nerd. Well, call me what you want to.

Michael, who graduated from a small, rural high school in a southern state, saw a high school diploma as necessary for getting a job and as superior to a GED:

And it was job-related, too. Because you know, you can't really, I mean as far as getting a job down there, there's nothing, hauling hay, whatever. I mean anybody can do that, but as far as an actual job, you have to have paperwork for it, and I'm

like, a diploma, not a GED, because everyone's like, you can quit school and go get your GED. That's not the same thing as a diploma. . . . People'd say, well what you mean? I thought it was the same thing. I said, no, if you have a diploma, that means you never quit, you never stopped, you went continuously, and finished what you had started. A GED means you had to stop at some point in time and drop out of high school, and try over. So that's the difference.

Some students noted that the fact that they had finished high school ran counter to the expectations of others, increasing their sense of pride. Learning English was the big task of high school for some of the students, those who arrived most recently to the U.S. Lydia and Rosa, 2 of the 4 most recently arrived immigrant students were especially proud that they had learned English well enough to graduate from high school. For Rosa, the pride in graduation from high school was increased because counselors had told her in her junior and again in her senior year that she would need more time to learn English and that there was no way that she could accomplish the goal of high school graduation in the 2 years during which she intended to do it. Rosa explained:

Because I start[ed] studying here 2 years ago and I was in Mexico before, so I came here and [the high school counselor] said I need to stay like 3 or 4 years to graduate and that was going to be too much for me and I didn't want to waste my time.

Rosa, who had been an excellent student in Mexico and nearly finished at the university preparatory high school, was angry when she got the counselor's verdict:

My counselor told me that I was not going to graduate in time and that I couldn't do it and that I wasn't able to take the classes I need, so I felt very angry because I thought I could do it and that's when I felt really anger.

Rosa first brought in her parents to talk with the counselor. When that did not work, she went to another counselor, who allowed her to enroll in the classes she would need to graduate. She studied hard, got A's and B's and graduated after 2 years in the U.S. That she had proven her abilities despite the counselor's advice made graduation even sweeter in Rosa's eyes:

And that's why when I graduated, I feel success because I showed to her that I could do it and I was "Oh, my God, I did" and she was "OK, congratulations." . . . There were obstacles, but I could overcome these.

She saw her success in graduating from high school as her personal accomplishment, one that she celebrated with her parents, extended family, and friends.

Armando, like Rosa, reported that he graduated counter to the expectations of some high school staff and, in addition, counter to the expectations of many of his friends. Unlike Rosa, Armando in his own estimation was not a good student in high school. But although he did not get good grades, he really enjoyed high school and did not consider dropping out. When I asked Armando if he had thought about dropping out of high school, he replied:

No, I never did. I liked high school. It was something fun. . . . I never really got good grades through like my whole life. I never really got good grades so I was satisfied always with a D, no matter what. I always thought a D was a passing grade no matter what, so I just wanted to make the grade to graduate and that's all I did in high school.

During his first year in high school, Armando had his education interrupted when his father was deported to Mexico. The whole family went to Mexico for about 3 months. When at the end of his freshman year Armando returned to the same high school he had left, he was behind his classmates in earning credits. Some high school staff told him that he probably would not be able to graduate with his classmates. Armando thought they were right at first, but then changed his mind:

Well after [the time in Mexico], I didn't think I was gonna graduate with my class because even the teachers told me. I went to the counselors, and they told me I wasn't gonna graduate with my class. But then after awhile, well, I started counting my credits, and at the end I realized that I could graduate, but they still would tell me like you're not gonna graduate. Like, they put me down, saying that I wasn't gonna graduate, that it was like too much for me. I had to pass every class tenth, eleventh and twelfth to graduate, so like it was a hard thing to do, but I did it.

Some of Armando's friends did not graduate, though they had been at the school for a full four years. Armando was proud of the fact that he graduated with his class when so many people told him that he would not.

Laurence was also proud of his high school graduation, partly because it was counter to the expectations of some in his extended family. Laurence told me about an incident that happened when he was 16 years old, an incident that made him angry. He had taken a summer job working for his uncle in construction. During a break in work, his uncle asked him about his plans for the future. Laurence replied that he planned to graduate from high school and then go to college to pursue his goal of getting an Associate's degree in business. His cousins, who were working the same job, reacted with laughter:

These two cousins, they were laughing at me because they didn't graduate [from high school]. . . . They told me that Mexicans, us Mexicans, the only thing we can do is work in construction, and that made me like feel so bad. Like, it gave me anger inside of me. They didn't believe in me even though they were my cousins and they were related to me. They didn't have faith that I was going to go on to higher education and pursue that. They're like, no you're going to end up like us or blah, blah, blah. They always tell me that and...every time that I see them, I feel angry of what they said. Probably they were speaking in ignorance, but I don't like really judge them. . . . The sentence he said, the only thing that [Mexicans] are good at is working construction. I mean I feel so angry that they didn't believe in me, and they don't have faith in me like achieving, getting my major.

Laurence recalled the graduation ceremony:

It made me feel proud because, how I was telling you about my cousins, because they didn't believe in me, that I was even going to graduate from high school because they didn't graduate. So just me being up there on that stage—everything just paused. I achieved something that they thought I wasn't going to. So it made me stand so proud and feel successful.

Dave graduated from his high school with feelings of pride and relief. The only White Anglo male student in the study, Dave differed from his classmates in other ways than ethnicity. He was from outside the state and had graduated from a private boarding school. "Passing high school" was Dave's nomination for the experience in his life related

to education that made him feel successful. Although “some subjects” were hard for him, and he “came really close to failing high school,” dropping out of high school was “not an option.” Finishing, said Dave, felt “really relieving.”

Three of the students, all males, said that they had come close to dropping out of high school. Roberto said that he wanted to drop out of school when he was in the 10th grade, but his mother told him to stay in school. When he graduated, something that, until his senior year, he did not believe was really going to happen, his mother was happy. Michael reported that he had nearly quit school with just a few weeks left in his senior year when he threw down his books and told school officials he was leaving. Michael had complaints about what he saw as low quality teaching and being told that he needed to dress differently for school because the clothing he wore to school was “gang-related.” Recalling that his mother had quit school in her senior year, an action Michael called “really stupid,” he said that he bought himself a new wardrobe of T-shirts and pants that would keep school officials from “harassing” him and stayed in school until graduation. Carlos said that the intervention of a favorite teacher stopped him from dropping out of school. He was in the school office filling out the paperwork for dropping out when his art teacher came into the office. The teacher talked him into staying in school.

Over half of the students mentioned taking great pride in their graduation from high school. In several cases, the students’ parents had not graduated from high school. For some of the students, the accomplishment came counter to the expectations of friends and family. For others, the pride was shared with family. College educators often forget the significance that this accomplishment has for many students and their families.

High School Friends

Friendships surfaced as memorable in several students’ recollections of their high school experience. Language, culture, and ethnicity influenced some students’

relationships with peers in high school. Two students' shifting use of pronouns in relationship to their friends provides hints to how these students see themselves in relationship to their friends. Sometimes friendships worked against academic engagement. On the other hand, several students gave examples of standing up for their beliefs in the face of peer pressure. Several students reported feeling sad as they said good-bye to high school friends.

Language, Culture, Ethnicity

Language, culture, and ethnicity, played a role in friendships for the students who went to high school in the United States. Sometimes the three elements were a force that brought people together, sometimes a force that kept them apart. Sometimes friendships were a source of fun, support, and learning. Other times they limited students' participation in school.

Many students formed friendships with students who spoke the same language or came from the same country as they did. Rosa attended a large urban high school where more than 90% of the students were Hispanic and more than half of them spoke Spanish. Rosa had been in the U.S. for 2 years when the study began. When I asked Rosa if her friends spoke English or mostly Spanish, she replied with a short laugh that her friendships were limited to people who spoke Spanish. She did not appear to think about the possibility of forming friendships with people in English. Rosa talked about the link between language and friendship, and the additional variable of whether the young person had grown up mainly in the U.S. or Mexico:

You can't speak Spanish with someone who doesn't understand you, so it is more difficult to make friends because they have a different way of thinking because they have lived here all their life and they have a different point of view. [My friends are] both people who were born in Mexico and people who have lived here most of their lives. For example, I have 2 cousins here. One has all his life here and the other has like 5 years here. And it is different. I can get closer to my cousin who lives here just 5 years than the other because . . . [my cousin who lived all his life

in the U.S.] has a different way—well everyone has a different way—but I think [I have more in] common with my other cousin than with him.

Anh, who came to the U.S. from Vietnam 3 years before the beginning of the study and attended the same high school as Rosa, observed that the Spanish speakers and the Asian speakers formed separate groups. She noted that many of the high school teachers spoke Spanish with the “Mexican” students, in her opinion adding to the separation between Spanish-speaking and Asian students. She talked about the difficulty of making friends with Spanish speakers in her high school:

Like sometimes I try to make friends with a Mexican, but when I try to talk, they still talk with me, but when they turn around, they spoke in Spanish so I cannot understand it and I feel so uncomfortable, you know.

When Omar, who came to the U.S. from Somalia during his high school years, talked about his high school friends in the U.S., not the same high school as the one Anh and Rosa attended, I asked him about where his friends came from. All of them were African immigrant students from either Somalia or Ethiopia.

Roberto, who came to the U.S. while he was in middle school and was enrolled in English language classes part of the time that he was in high school, talked about his choice of friends as limited, not by language, but by race. He made his choice of friends, partly out of fear of being rejected by students who were not Hispanic, or in Roberto's words, his “race.” From his perspective at the beginning of college, this way of making choices about friends affected his academic work in high school.

When I was in high school, you know the first [thing] you do when you go from middle school to high school, you find friends, but you think about if you go and be friends with some other people who are not the same race you are, he might not want you to be his friend, so you go and look for kind of your race. That's the mistake I did. I went to find friends with my own race and they did not care about studying.

Cross-Language Friendships

While language and ethnicity limited access to friendships for some students, Tam and Javier, told stories of cross-cultural, cross-language friendships, ones that played important roles in their learning of English and feeling more comfortable in a new culture. Javier, who had been in the U.S. just 18 months when the study began, told about feeling isolated and "lost" when he first came to the U.S. and started attending high school here. He moved from Mexico, where he was "pretty social," to a school where he felt like he was "closed into my bubble," separated from those around him by the lack of a common language. He reported feeling angry at himself and "desperate" during his first semester in the U.S. Then he met "an American guy who likes to speak Spanish because he was half Latin and half American." They made an agreement to help each other with the languages they wanted to learn. Javier helped his new acquaintance with Spanish, and he in turn helped Javier with English. Then, said Javier, "I start talking and little by little start talking with more persons and with my teachers and I start expressing myself better." Javier also had a bilingual girlfriend who helped him with learning English. Javier talked about how they communicated using English and Spanish:

My girlfriend's Latin, but she grew up always in California, so she always spoke English. She practiced there in Spanish, too. So when I started dating her, she always talked to me in English, so I was translating the English to Spanish, and then I was translating my answer from Spanish to English. So that's helped me a little bit more.

Through friendships with proficient English speakers, who also spoke Spanish, Javier began to break down his social isolation and to make progress in speaking English.

Like Javier, Tam, who is from Vietnam and had been in the U.S. for a little less than 3 years when the study began, credited friendships with English speakers as an important factor in his learning English. When he first came to the U.S., Tam attended a high school with very few Vietnamese speakers. He called the high school "a White

school." I thought when Tam began talking about his experience that he would focus on his isolation. However, Tam viewed being enrolled in the first school as an advantage for him. He came to the U.S. having had very little exposure to English. His mind, he said, was "just like blank paper. There weren't any words on it." He talked about how he thought having no Vietnamese speakers at his first high school helped him to learn English faster:

Maybe the first time I learn English, it's very tough for me. Just nobody help me by Vietnamese help, but that is the also the way that helped me to learn faster English. [When I transferred to the same high school that Anh and Rosa went to], there's a lot of Vietnamese. I just learned a little bit [of English there]. But the time in [the first high school] was enough to teach me some basic English. So if you have a base, you can stand on it to move up to the next level, right? But what happens if the people don't have the base already, just like my friends who just came here almost for a year and they came directly to [my second high school]? There's a lot of Vietnamese. They spoke Vietnamese all the time. So nothing changed. So I feel very lucky that I went to a school that had no Vietnamese.

I asked Tam if he made friends at his first high school. He replied, again focusing on his perception of how, after an initial difficult period, having to depend on English helped him learn it:

Yeah. They [are] all white and Mexican. But it's fun. I got to know English. [At first,] I cannot understand what they say, what they talking about. So I feel a little bad, like outcast. I didn't know anything. [Later] I can understand a little bit, even [if] not all. I can listen, and I feel it's interesting, and I want to know more about English. So day by day, I will understand everything they say. It was really good.

Private School Cultures

Contrary to common perceptions of the high school backgrounds of community college students, 2 students in the study graduated from private high schools, Dave from a boarding school on the east coast and Laura from a local parochial school. Dave thought that the small classes that he had in boarding school helped him to pass high school. On the day near the beginning of the semester when I interviewed Dave, the class had just discussed the difference between a group and a community. In that discussion, a group was described as being together for a specific time for a shared purpose, while a

community had a commitment to be mutually supportive. I asked Dave whether he would call the boarding school a group or a community. He replied:

It was a community. Definitely more of a community. At a boarding school that size, that small, it was definitely more of a community . . . because everybody knew each other. And they were either very, very close friends, um, boyfriend and girlfriend, or just plain friends. . . . Like if you were new, you would be known, like, everybody would know your name like the second day that you were there.

Dave viewed the small class size of 6 or 8 students at the boarding school as positive because students could not sit in back of the class and "hide from the teacher." However, it did not seem that Dave had made friendships there that would carry over to his college years. Dave said he did not know why his parents chose to send him to a boarding school. In fact, he said that he "kinda" wished that he had gone to high school in his hometown, where he went to middle school so that he would have friends there. He said that he had e-mail contact with one friend from the boarding school who had played in a rock band with him. They continued to exchange song lyrics they were writing. However, he had no idea of where this friend lived now and no plans to visit him. Dave seemed to me to be more socially isolated than any of the students. He was geographically distant from his family, his hometown, and his former boarding school. He lived alone in a downtown apartment.

Laura also went to a private school, a parochial school in the same metropolitan area as the community college. She had strong social ties to a small group of high school friends and lived with her family. She reported some embarrassment about not being allowed to attend the high school for a couple of weeks in her senior year when her family could not pay tuition. She was embarrassed, she said, "[because] all your friends know what's going on. If you go to the office, . . . they know it's because you have money issues, and it's really like everyone knows your business, and it shouldn't be that way." She also found that she had to stand up for her Catholic beliefs in this Protestant religious school. But on the whole, Laura was satisfied with the school experience. She did not talk about

why her family chose a parochial school for her. She had gone to private schools all her life, despite the financial hardship, so as she said, "I don't know anything different."

Older Students and School Friendships

High school friendships did not come up as often in conversations with students who had been out of school for longer than 2 years. Michael, who had been out of high school for five years and Jimmy, who had earned a GED and spent most of his teen years incarcerated, did not talk about friends from their teen years. Charlayne, one of the two students in her early 30's, spoke about high school with a distanced amusement, talking about how she did not do so well in some high school classes because she was more interested in having fun with her "little friends" than in academics. Angela was an exception. She finished high school in the Philippines before coming to the U.S. almost 5 years previous to the study. She maintained e-mail and phone contact with a group of 7 friends. "They've all finished college now and are having their babies," she said. Ruby, who came to the U.S from Ghana just 5 months before starting college, missed her friends from home, and maintained contact with them by phone. She felt constrained by a perception that going out to meet people in the U.S. was not safe. She said that being in the U.S was hard for her. When I asked her why, she replied:

Let's see. Making friends. I don't even have a friend yet so—in Ghana I had friends and I could go out, but here, no. Here it is quite, I don't know, they say dangerous. Ghana is quite free. You can just walk around free, but here, no.

Peers in an Academic Community

I found it interesting to note the pronouns that Eddie and Roberto used when they talked about experiences with their peer groups. Most of the students used first person singular, I and me, when they talked about experiences with high school friends, or their experiences as students. Eddie and Roberto used first person plural to talk about 2 experiences involving their peers. Eddie, who came to the U.S. during his first year of high

school, told a long story about how his Mexican middle school class had negotiated with their teacher to come to an agreement about how to handle homework and due dates. In relating this experience, Eddie used the pronoun “we” for himself and his classmates:

But then we talked to him, and we told him, we don't want that much of a flexibility, but make a day so that we can turn in all of our work. And he's like, I can work with that, but it all depends on you, because if you fail that once, I'm just going to stick to my plan. We stick to that point, and he liked it. He knew that we were responsible even more. We got more control, and we supported each other, and we got his help when we needed it. What if he says, we have to turn in that work today, and nobody understands it?

Eddie's use of “we” and the content of his story reminded me of my experience teaching in a German high school. In the German school system, where small groups, classes of about 20 to 25 students, stay together over a period of several years as they progress through a school, the identification with this small group of students is very strong. The word “Klassengemeinschaft,” which can be translated as “class community,” is widely used for the student group. It connotes camaraderie, mutual support, and solidarity. I think Eddie's story of his Mexican middle school class reveals a similar sense of community, one that is very compatible with the philosophy of the FastStart program in which students were enrolled for the study. This kind of community among learners, coupled with communication with the teacher, appears to me to promote learning for many students.

Friendships as Distractions from Academic Work

Of course, in contrast to the middle school community that Eddie described, a peer group may align itself in opposition to school. Roberto's use of “we” when he talked about his high school experience shows, in part, this oppositional alignment. When Roberto talked about his confusion in his English language classes, I asked him if the other students were as confused as he was. He replied, “We shared everything, and we were all like confused.” Like Eddie in his story about his Mexican middle school class, Roberto used

"we" when he talked about his learning in his English language class, but Roberto's group did not take action that had a positive outcome for their academic achievement. From Roberto's perspective, improvement came only when they got a different teacher:

Well, we were all like in the same level of English, and we all got like sad at the same time because we thought we were never going to learn English the way she was teaching us. But after 2 years when the other teacher came, we learned more than we did with the other teacher because he kind of explained us more in an easier way.

When Roberto complained about a teacher who did not explain concepts clearly, I asked him what he saw as the students' responsibility in that situation. He replied, "My responsibility I think was if I couldn't understand what she was trying to say, I think I could have asked her to explain it more, but we just didn't." He talked about his individual responsibility using "my" and "I", but in explaining the lack of action, he changed to "we". When I asked him about why he thought the group did not take action, he said, "I didn't because I was around with my other friends and we didn't pay attention to it." Later in the interview, he gave more information about his and his friends' disengagement from school:

In high school I had a lot of friends and we used to get together and not pay attention to what the teacher was telling us. And most of time, we didn't go to classes. We used to go out.

Roberto's perspective as a beginning college student showed a change in his relationship to his high school peer group. He distanced himself from his high school friends and their activities, using "they" instead of "we": "All they did was be part of a gang and smoking, not things that they were supposed to do." He described his choice of friends in high school as "a mistake." He saw the change in his alignment to education as a result of personal growth: "But now I think that changed because you grow up, you grow more, and when you grow more, you think more about your life and what you want to be, and that's why things changed." He talked about his plans using "I" and his high school friends using "they." The use of "we" was limited to talk of the past:

I am decided to do my work and everything to get where I want to be. Like I still see my friends from high school, but they said let's do that, let's do this, and I said no. You can do that if you want to, but I'm not going to. We just talk, but I don't do the same things we used to do. . . . In high school I used to think what are they going to say if I do this or no. Like right now, I don't care about it that much because all I care about is my life and how I want it to be.

Armando, like Roberto, viewed his relationships with peers as a negative influence on his academic work, especially during the 10th grade. Armando's 9th grade school attendance was interrupted by his father's deportation to Mexico and his family's subsequent 3-month stay there. Armando looked back on his time in Mexico very negatively and, despite my leading questions in the interview, could find nothing good to say about those 3 months. When he came back to his U.S. high school, he felt a distance between himself and his friends. He struggled to explain his feelings:

It felt good being back, but nothing was the same after that. Like your best friend wasn't the same and— . . . No, they weren't the same. Like, I don't know, like you missed a lot of things. You couldn't relate to them, and it was just different. Like it was never the same after that. Like you can tell they were a little separated from you.

Later in the interview, Armando talked about needing to take the lowest level of remedial math during his first semester in college. I asked him why he thought he did not learn math well in high school. He said that he got "sidetracked" and "distracted," and "I had a lot of things going on, and like I was always one of those guys that'd be walking around the classroom just bugging everybody." In his college remedial class there was no one to "mess around with" because he did not know anyone, so he could concentrate. As he thought back more about high school and his academic performance, he remembered that in his freshman year he did well, getting A's and B's, but in 10th grade, Armando said, "I really messed up." His perception of the cause of his academic slide was that "nobody believed in me and I kinda like got a point in my head that I wasn't gonna do it. I was like, may as well just slack off." He explained further about the effect of the 3-month

interruption on his academic performance. In his opinion, the academic slide came not because of missing academic work, but because of how the time away from the high school influenced how he interacted with his friends:

I was trying to catch up with everything that was going on. Like three months seems like a little bit of time, but everything, like fashion, changes even if it's only three months. You try and do a lot of things that you missed out on. And just trying to catch up with your friends. Like they go and ditch and you want to go with them because you already missed out on three months. You don't want to miss out on another day. Like sometimes we'd just ditch and go to a house and just watch TV.

During Armando's 10th grade year, trying to regain his place with his peers had a higher priority than doing academic work.

Standing Up for Beliefs

Armando and Roberto appeared to differentiate their opinions, goals, and choices from those of their peers as they looked back on their time in high school, but they both recounted difficulty in separating expectations they had for themselves from expectations their peers had for them. Some of the students in the study recounted experiences that show that at times while they were in high school they were figuring out who they were in opposition to their peers.

One of the cards I used in the individual interviews with students had the prompt "standing up for your beliefs." This card often required some explanation from me. Not every student could think of or chose to tell me of such an experience. Dave, the student who had attended a boarding school commented:

And standing up for my beliefs. I thought about that one really hard, but couldn't think of anything. I don't think that I ever had to stand up for my beliefs. I guess the people around me felt the same way, and I just never have been in that situation, I guess.

Other students, however, reported instances of trying to get friends to accept and understand others who were different from them, refusing to let their friends copy their

homework, and acting in ways that showed friends they were different from the friends' perceptions. A few students reported involvement in activities related to societal problems and political action.

Armando, who talked about letting his grades slide in 10th grade as he turned his energy to shoring up his friendships, gives a different picture of himself in his final year of high school. In response to the card "standing up for my beliefs," Armando cited a quote that his classmates chose as their class motto: "If you never take a stand, you will never make a difference." He saw his graduation from high school as taking a stand for his beliefs in himself and counter to the beliefs of many of his friends and family about him:

Graduation was a big thing for me and just graduating was taking a stand for me. Nobody expected me to graduate, and then at the end it was like a great thing. I made a stand and I made a point to everybody that didn't believe in going to school. I would think I stand up for my beliefs that I could graduate, and I did it at the end.

Social Justice and Political Beliefs

Carlos, Lydia, Laurence, and Cristina reported being involved in community organization work or political action. Each of them explained the involvement as related to their beliefs. In Carlos' Hispanic American Literature class in high school, the teacher gave students the opportunity to discuss historic social injustice, facilitated research into sweatshops, and invited students to participate with him at a protest action in front of a local company. Carlos recounted his participation in the protest. He also helped the teacher with writing letters to the local school board about the employment practices of the company from which the school district bought its football uniforms. Asked if there were any other issues about which he felt strongly enough to take action, Carlos brought up his belief that gay people are often treated unjustly in society. He was not involved in any organized political action on the issue of gay rights, and he thought the problem could be addressed by getting more information about homosexuality to people.

As a self-described leader in his high school, Laurence talked about two ways in which he participated in community service. During his sophomore year, he participated in a community service project in which students cooked for people at a rescue mission, served them food, and talked with them. Laurence said this experience helped him to see that "one person really can make a difference." The person making a difference in this situation, according to Laurence, was the teacher who organized the trip for students. He came away from the experience recognizing the satisfaction he could gain from serving others. A conversation that he had with one of the persons using the services of the rescue mission helped him recognize the humanity of these down-and-out people and to respect the willingness of one person to share his story:

Those people even though they don't have like a home or anything, they're just normal people. Because they were talking to us like normal people, normal human beings, so it made me feel like it doesn't matter what you have in life, that someone can really touch you. Everything is not based on money. [One of the persons I talked to there] was telling his life experience, and I told him that I was in high school—a sophomore. That person [said], "Don't do the same thing that I did. I dropped out of high school." So that made me feel like he really cared about the youth not dropping out because he already went through that, so it made me feel proud of him, that no matter his situation, he is still giving his story, his life experience.

Partly as a result of the awareness gained through this experience at the rescue mission, Laurence organized and served as president of a small student club that raised money for non-profit community organizations.

Cristina's and Lydia's social activism began in high school and continued during their first semester in college. Cristina worked for a community organization in which she received training as a "neighborhood liaison" and a "community organizer." She invited people to community events and focus groups and sometimes facilitated meetings. She used her fluent Spanish to communicate with Spanish-speaking members of the community. Lydia also used Spanish in her work as a "youth organizer" for an organization

of Hispanic parents and youth, the goal of which is to improve the public school system's response to Spanish-speaking students. Lydia described this work as engagement for social change:

I like to help people and this job is an organization to defend the immigrants' rights and the students' rights. So I'm getting the opportunity to help people, to change someone's life. I really like it. When I came [to the United States], I start to see like injustice from the government, from the laws that they are putting, and it is not fair to the immigrant people. Because it is my people. And I don't know, I start to see this injustice, and I start to think I want to make some changes. I want to be part of these changes.

She credited a high school English teacher with getting her involved in the organization and helping her to find this opportunity for learning: "Thanks to her. Because I'm getting the opportunity to learn more about political issues, [and about] the public school system. . . . I know how the government works here. And I feel so lucky."

Standing Up in Interactions with Peers

While standing up for beliefs about social justice involved interaction with adults and community, other students' reports about standing up for their beliefs were connected to their interactions with peers. Rosa and Eddie gave instances of trying to get friends to understand others, to be more tolerant and empathetic. Rosa recounted an instance when friends of hers were laughing at a special education student. At her first attempts to get her friends to stop ridiculing the other student, Rosa's friends turned on her, laughing at and ridiculing her. Rosa persisted, telling her friends that the object of their ridicule was a person like them and that they might some day have a son or a brother with mental retardation. Rosa reported that "after some time" her friends understood her viewpoint and treated the special education student better. Rosa explained why she thought it was important to stand up for her beliefs in this situation:

That [behavior of my friends] is ignorant. I thought that it was important because it could happen to any person and if I would be in a situation like that I want someone to help me. They just see the appearance, just see how they act, and

I'm, no, I think we are equal and the appearance is not just what you are. You have to know the people deeply.

When I asked Rosa, why she could see that and her friends could not, she replied, "Maybe they haven't lived the things that I have lived."

Eddie got eloquent, if not specific, on the subject of standing up for his beliefs, using rapid speech and the rhythms, clicks, and hand gestures of hip-hop culture:

Sometimes because a person is black, or Asian, or Mexican, they don't want them on the team. They say, I don't want them because they don't know how to talk or I don't want them because we speak Spanish and they don't. And I say, hey, man, we're all the same, but we're different physically and how we talk, but we're all the same. We all have the same body, hands, fingers. Different colors, but we're still the same, man. OK, get into his shoes. How would you feel? You can't get an apartment cause you're not the same group? How would you feel? . . . Let's be together. Let's work together. . . . Hey, careful what you say, I like this person, man.

Eddie followed up with an example of a friend's experience:

That happened to one of my friends. He's older now. He didn't like black people. He didn't like this guy. He start working, he got his degree, that person did the same. Now that black person is his boss. He saw him. Are you my boss? Yeah, I'm the boss of this company. I control this company. I decide who stays here and who goes. Remember when you told me back in the day that you didn't like me. . . . What I do now? Well, he gave him a hand, and [my friend] finally understood that no matter what color you are, it matters who you are, and how you are. So I would say, always stand for other people.

Eddie credited his family with his views about tolerance, inclusion, and understanding of differences.

Angela gave an example of standing up for her beliefs that she drew from her junior high school days in the Philippines. Six of her friends wanted to copy her homework, but Angela did not feel good about it. She had stayed up late, done the reading, but her friends had done nothing except watch TV. When she told them no, they could not copy her homework, they got angry. She recalls being unconcerned, and the outcome did not in fact endanger her friendships. Her friends, after they got over being angry, told her that they had learned from the experience, that she was right, and that it was wrong for them to

rely on her all the time. Some of those junior high friendships survived growing older and Angela's move across an ocean. Angela said that if people are "true friends," they will be more concerned about their futures and the futures of each other. In her experience, true friendships survive this sort of conflict.

Tam's experience was similar to Angela's in that he clashed with his friends on almost the same issue, but it was different in resolution. Tam thought that his friendships suffered because of his refusal to do homework for them, cheat for them on tests, and pay for them on various occasions. Tam talked about his beliefs about friendship:

But my belief is that, yeah, you do have to believe the best friend is the one who can help you whenever you have problems, but it doesn't mean that they have to pay for you or like the way the others take advantage of the other people, you know what I'm saying? I can help you like in school, like help you to do homework, like explain to you, just give you an idea to do the homework. [Being your friend] doesn't mean that I have to do the homework for you. And that's what is my belief. But [some of my friends from high school] think like friends have to help each other, like even do the homework for them too, like even cheating for him or her during the exams. That wasn't my belief. Because if you believe that you never getting better. You never get any knowledge from school, just waste your time, and waste your life, too.

Tam went on to say that people have to "stand on their feet", "be independent," because that is important in "real life." Tam said that he had lost respect as a result of this conflict with friends. I was not sure if Tam meant that he lost the respect that his friends had previously had for him, or that he lost the respect that he had previously had for his friends, but clearly he felt a sense of loss. He did not, however, regret standing up for his beliefs. When I asked him how this loss made him feel, he said that it did not make him sad. He explained:

It's just because I feel I do the right thing. But I feel disappointed about them. I look down on them. I think they're useless. Because I have both hands, and they have, too, but how come they cannot stand on their feet, right? But it doesn't mean I don't have responsibility to my friend. You know, like if they have trouble, I will give a hand to them. I will help them up, but not the way to make them lazy. So just keep losing respect. It's OK. You know sometimes I think I don't need to hang out with them because they are not make me getting better, maybe they will make me

become worse like them, so sometimes I just confused, whether I will continue to hang out with them or not. Just I am confused and I keep thinking about it. I think they are good friends, but sometimes they are just take advantage of other people. So that's why. Life is hard. Hard to live.

Hard Lessons

Indeed, life has hard lessons for high school students, and some of the hard lessons are learned from friends. Lydia recounted an incident in which she learned how she wanted to handle her anger at a friend. Carlos learned about the randomness of violence.

Lydia recalled responding in anger in an argument with a cousin who had been a very close friend of hers. The long-time friends hurt each other with words said in anger. Though after several months, they were beginning to rebuild their relationship, Lydia said the relationship still suffered and that the renewed contact was tentative. When I asked her what she learned from this experience, Lydia responded, "Oh, next time when I get a fight, I prefer to reserve my comments. Because I don't want to hurt anybody and I don't want them to hurt me. I prefer to think first and then talk."

When Carlos was in high school, one of his close friends was killed in a drive-by shooting. In addition to the grief at losing a friend, the experience caused Carlos to think about the fragility of life. He shook his head, still wondering "that one day you can be here and the next day you could be gone." He also saw the death of his friend as evidence that life is not necessarily fair or predictable. His friend was someone who "never did nothing wrong." He was someone who, like Carlos, looked at people they knew who were involved in gangs, drugs, and gambling, people "who took life for granted," and told each other that those people were "crazy." His friend, said Carlos, was "a great kid," who helped others to turn their lives around. The experience also made Carlos think that, like his friend, he could be killed, and that he should "live life to the fullest. Do your own thing and just don't regret

it." The experience did not make Carlos more careful. His friend was someone who would try to break up a fight instead of keeping a safe distance from it. Carlos admired his friend's stance and said that always being careful will not necessarily protect a person from violence. As support for that position, Carlos repeated that his friend was doing nothing wrong when he was shot. Being too careful, in Carlos' opinion, was not a desirable option. He explained, "Because like a lot of people, they say that they're always careful and stuff, like if you see their lives, it's like really boring, like really boring lives they live."

Saying Good-Bye

For most of the recent high school graduates in the study finishing high school meant saying good-bye to high school friends. Interestingly, with the exception of Angela from the Philippines and Ruby from Ghana, neither of whom attended high school in the U.S., none of the immigrant students reported maintaining friendships from their schools or neighborhoods in their home countries, suggesting that the U.S. high school was the place where they formed peer relationships that were important to them in late adolescence and early adulthood.

A few students, like Cristina, Javier, and Tam, talked about their boyfriends or girlfriends, relationships that began while they were in high school, as being ongoing important people in their lives. Javier brought his girlfriend, and Cristina, her boyfriend, to two out-of-class college activities that I participated in. Tam talked about how his girlfriend was a better influence on him than his male friends from high school because she helped him to be more disciplined about school and to appreciate his family.. Laura brought a girlfriend from high school to an out-of-class college event. Omar talked about continuing to spend time on weekends with friends from high school. Three students reported feeling sadness about the separation from high school friends.

However, for many of the students the end of high school meant an end, or at least big shifts, in their relationships with high school friends. As described previously with the examples of Armando, Tam, and Roberto, some students reported their values and goals meant putting distance between themselves and their high school friends. Rosa, Lydia, and Alex all talked about feeling some sadness at leaving high school friends behind them. Rosa said she was sad when she "said goodbye" to her friends in high school, most of whom were still in high school as she started college. Rosa added, "That was sad. I still see them, but it's not the same thing because they share more time."

Alex echoed Rosa's sentiments, describing his feeling at leaving high school as one of loss:

I just felt attached to high school. . . . I felt like . . . I lost friends [when I graduated], and I lost like friendships because people change after a while and you kind of don't hear from some. And it's just different.

Alex seemed to accept this loss as a part of moving on and changed circumstances. He was not trying to hold on to those friendships.

Summary: High School Friendships

Students' stories about their high school friendships are relevant to this study in at least 3 ways. First, they illustrate students' developing identities. The stories show them in transition between being defined by friends and defining themselves in opposition to their friends. Second, they show a richness and depth of experience that some teachers in the community college may not recognize. They may see apathetic faces of students who cannot read or write well. These stories of high school experience show students who were engaged in standing up for their convictions. Third, the stories show that moving from high school to college often leaves students socially isolated, pointing to the need for college classrooms to support students in developing new friendships.

Formative Experiences and Important Adults

As students looked back on past experiences related to learning and education, they talked about formative experiences and adults that had been influential. The students who immigrated to the U.S. during middle or high school chose to talk about incidents, people, and emotions related to leaving one country and moving to the U.S. Most of these students talked about how they learned English and the challenges that posed. Many students talked about activities that engaged their interests. They usually credited an adult with encouraging them to pursue those activities. A few of them remembered negative experiences with high school teachers or counselors, but almost all of the students who talked about their high school experiences recalled an adult who was important in their lives. Almost all of the students talked about the roles that family members played in their lives before they came to college.

Coming to the United States and Learning English

Coming to the U.S. was, for most of the foreign-born students, a decision made by the adults in their lives, a family decision, which most of the students did not explain, perhaps because they did not participate in the decision because of their young age at the time of the move, because they had no strong memories, or because they did not choose to tell me about the experience. Once the young people came to the U.S., they faced the tasks of learning to live in a new culture, adjusting to a different education system, and learning English. Many students in the study drew on their emotional, intellectual, and social resources to come to terms with this life-changing event.

Of the 15 students born outside the U.S., only Angela made the decision to come to the U.S. on her own as an adult. She came to the U.S., she said, even though it interrupted the post-secondary schooling she had begun in the Philippines, to take advantage of "more chances" she would have in the U.S. Almost 5 years after arriving in

the U.S., as the study began, Angela expressed some ambivalence about her decision, thinking that it may have been better for her to stay in the Philippines to finish her post-secondary education. However, she spent little energy on regrets and was looking forward to a chance to earn an accounting degree in the U.S. Angela's spoken English was rapid and fluent, but often not grammatically correct. She did not mention language as a significant hurdle in her years in the U.S. She had done some of her secondary and post-secondary school work in the Philippines in English. Although she did not talk about language learning explicitly, she did talk about overcoming awkwardness and shyness:

[I lost] the awkwardness [in recent years], I think. Because before, I just feel awkward to say something, and being shy and stuff. Now I don't have that. Now I'm more up front to people. Like if I want to say something, I'm not like, oh, I don't want to. Like now to Sara (her college instructor), I feel inferior because she's a teacher. But, no, I'm going to talk to her. Why not? Just people. Why are you scared? It's just a human being. Why do you feel awkward? I learn from [my experiences], like maturity. That's why. I've got more confidence. . . . So basically I changed from a shy one. Now, I just talk and talk and talk and don't care what [other people] say. Like, oh, well, that's me That's my life, I grow from it, confidence, experiences. I stand on my own feet. That's big! So awkwardness is just kind of gone I guess.

Ruby, like Angela, came to the U.S. after finishing high school in her home country of Ghana and after having begun post-secondary school there. Unlike Angela, Ruby came because her father and sister were in the U.S. Of all the students in the study, she was the most recent arrival, having been in the U.S. for only 5 months at the beginning of the study. At the time the study began, Ruby reported that being in the United States was "very hard" for her. When asked what was hard about it she exclaimed, "Everything!" She went on to name climate, differences in school, the food, but most difficult, she said, was "making friends." Ruby spoke English fluently without grammatical errors with a lilting accent. Like Angela, some of her secondary and post-secondary classes were conducted in English. Despite her fluency and accurate grammar, Ruby reported being asked often to repeat herself. Asked how she felt when people did not understand her, she said, "Well,

sometimes it makes me angry. It makes you feel like maybe you are not saying the right thing or maybe they are trying to tease you or something, but now I think I'll get used to it." The uncertainty that these reactions generated may have influenced one of the goals Ruby had set for herself in the first semester of coursework: "To know how to read confidently. . . . Be more confident in pronouncing words."

One student's story showed a pattern that is common for many young people in the U.S. today. Throughout her life, Cristina had moved between two countries. Cristina, who was born in the U.S., moved back and forth between Mexico because, according to her, her father did not like living in the U.S. She described her school years from pre-school through middle school as "backwards and forwards" between U.S. and Mexican schools. She learned to read and write in both English and Spanish. Her high school years were spent entirely in the U.S., where she was an honor student. She assessed her Spanish speaking skills as better than her English speaking skills. She also enjoyed reading in Spanish regularly. She appeared to bridge the two cultures comfortably, seeing her Spanish language skills as an asset for her community and her future.

Of the five students who came to the United States during their elementary school years, only one of them mentioned coming to the U.S. and learning English in their interviews, suggesting perhaps that, for people who came to the U.S. as young children, the memories of coming to a new country and learning a new language had faded. Only one student who came to the U.S. during the late elementary years, Alex, reported a memory of his early years in the U.S. "I was just completely lost," he recalled. He remembered 6th and 7th grades as being very difficult and then 8th grade being easier.

Negotiating Emotions and Learning English

The students who came to the U.S. during their high school years reported vivid memories of their feelings about being in a new country where they did not understand the

language. Anger, loss, and isolation were themes in students' memories. Three of the students reported reacting with anger to the situation in which they found themselves. Each of them drew lessons from the emotional experiences.

Anh recounted her first day at the U.S. high school she attended for three years before starting college:

I went to school—that's my first day—and I came to classes, like in gym, about dancing or something. I don't remember. The teacher told me something to do, but I didn't know what he talking about, so I smile to tell him that I'm very friendly but after that he kick me out class. I don't know why, and I feel so angry about that, angry about myself, and angry about him. [So] after school I went home and I'm thinking back, . . . and I want to give up school.

She went home that day with a feeling of loss. "I lost my language," she said, referring to her loss of the ability to make herself understood. However, Anh thought, too, about the sacrifices her brother was making for her. Although he was not able to go to college because of the cost, Anh said that he told her, "He [would] work really hard on the morning until night and he save money to send me to college, so because of that I want to do something for him, so I tried to learn a new language." After that first day and the thoughts about quitting school, Anh resolved to continue going to school. "I knew," she said, "I had to depend to myself."

When I asked Anh more about why she felt angry at the teacher and why she felt angry at herself, she replied:

I feel angry about him because like I didn't know how to speak English, so he's supposed to helping me, not kick me out of class like that because you know when you attend at the new country, you feel so nervous. You [need] somebody to help, not somebody to kick you out. And I feel angry with me because . . . because I made a decision to come to the U.S.

I asked Anh if she still felt angry about the decision to come to the United States. She laughed good-naturedly, and said no, that the experience on the first day had helped her to understand that she needed to help herself and not to depend on others. Then, in a

response I found delightful, she said that she thought the experiences made good subject matter for her essays.

Javier was, at first, incredulous about his family's decision to move to the U.S. He viewed the move as a loss of the life he knew in Mexico. Javier talked about his reaction when he first arrived in the U.S.:

I feel torture, really torture, right here inside of me, I can tell you, the day that we come here. I [thought] all my life is over there [in Mexico]: my friends, my girlfriend, the education that I had. I feel like I already lose it. All the time that I studied over there is for nothing. The day that [my family] made the decision, I was, like, ah, what is wrong with you? I put all my effort this past, like twelve years, and you just tell me that we're going to stay here to start another twelve years of life? And I feel really tortured that day, I was, like, depressed. I was, like, coming to a new country? What we going to do here? Where we going to work? With who I going to hang out? . . . I don't even know how to talk to them. What I going to be doing next day?

Javier did, however, come to terms with his parents' decision, one that they made in response to what Javier described as a "family tragedy." When Javier's uncle's wife and children were all killed in an automobile accident, Javier's father decided to move to the U.S. to support his brother. Javier was given the choice to join the rest of the family in the U.S. or to stay in Mexico to finish high school and attend university in Mexico. After weighing the separation from his family, the uncertainty of getting into the highly competitive Mexican universities, and the advantages of knowing English if he decides to return to Mexico, Javier decided to take his chances. He decided to look forward instead of backward at the life he had in Mexico:

You always have to deal with what the future have for you. No matter if it's good or if it's not, you know. And you can want to hide your head, where you are living now, but you have to always look forward for what is going to happen.

One of the frustrations for Javier, and for Rosa as well, was finding that they were required to repeat some academic work in the U.S. high school that they had already done

in Mexico. Javier and Rosa had both attended a *preparatoria* high school, a university preparatory high school in Mexico, when they came to the United States.

Rosa talked about some of the differences she observed between her high school in Mexico and the high school she attended in the U.S. In the U.S., Rosa observed, "they didn't really care about the education like they did in Mexico." Both Rosa and Javier talked about experiencing less pressure in their American high schools than in their college preparatory Mexican high schools. Rosa said that she had more homework at her university preparatory high school in Mexico than she had in the U.S. high school, that Mexican teachers were stricter about due dates, and that much of the content she had in high school classes in the U.S. was a review of what she had studied in Mexico. Both Rosa and Javier said that they thought they pushed themselves harder to learn in Mexico than in the U.S. Laura said that she preferred the school in Mexico:

I liked the way in Mexico because I learned more and I was pushing myself and trying to memorize something or learn something and here [in the U.S.] I do [the school work] but sometimes I don't do my best. Or I think that was just important for that time or for that day.

Rosa's struggle with school counselors to allow her to take the courses she needed to graduate within two years is described in the section "High School Graduation: A Proud Moment." When I asked her why she thought the counselor would not let her enroll in the courses she needed, Rosa said that the counselor had lived in Italy and, because it had taken her 3 or 4 years to learn Italian, she thought it would take Rosa that long to learn English well enough to finish high school. When Rosa went to another counselor to make her case, the counselor allowed her to sign up for higher level courses. Rosa thought that the reason the counselor gave her consent was that she found out Rosa's grades from Mexico and saw that she was an excellent student.

Javier also had some discussions with high school counselors about the courses he was taking. He talked about his senior year in high school:

All my senior year, I was doing nothing in school because it was so easy for me. [The counselors] put me in classes where I was already passing in Mexico. And I told them, and they were like, These are the requirements to graduate, so you have to take them. So [I did].

Javier expressed his disappointment at being placed in an algebra class in the U.S. high school when he had already completed a semester of calculus in Mexico:

And the education, that's one of the things I was, like, not disappointed, but I think that the education here was really different, you know. . . . And I feel like, ah, kind of disappointed because I put all my effort over there and study so hard. And I came here, and I was taking classes that I already know. I think that I am wasting my time. So I feel a lot of doubt [about my decision to come here].

For both Javier and Rosa, the intellectual challenge and accomplishment of approximately 2 years they spent in American high schools was learning English, but they did not give themselves or the high school environment credit for that learning. At the beginning of the college semester, Rosa was still very uncertain that her English skills were adequate for the academic work ahead of her. Javier still expressed frustration about his ability to express his ideas. Perhaps they were at that point so focused on what they still needed to learn that they were not able to recognize how much progress they had made in learning English.

Faced with the task of learning English, all of the students except Eddie talked about their experiences of learning English in the U.S. as initially stressful. Eddie reported, not the stressful beginnings, but the feelings of success and pride he took in learning English quickly:

The first year, I got to level 1, level 2. Then they jumped me to level 4. Then level 5 and 6 and regular classes. They said, you learned English in one year, how did you do that? Everyone would ask me. You have not even 2 years here, and you're already speaking English. It's because it's not hard for me. It ain't hard. I don't know everything about it. I still like, you know, mess around and make mistakes, but I'm trying, you know. I'm trying to learn it, and it's not hard for me.

Eddie's English language teachers in the high school recognized his quick progress and kept moving him to more challenging classes. Eddie described the process:

My English teacher in level 3 was the one that said it was too easy for me. She was like, you know, I'm going to jump you to level 5, and I was like, are you sure? But when I got to level 5, it was easy. She knew. After that test we took, I was the higher in the class, none of the questions were wrong. I just knew them, I told her. They changed me right away. Then when I got to that class, we started doing essays and we started doing all kinds of work and reading more books, and that's why I got to learn more.

Javier reported feeling angry and isolated when he first came to the U.S. because he could not communicate:

I feel angry all the times when I didn't know how to talk or how to express myself in school. . . . It's really hard for a person, you know, it's like all your hope and everything is going down, down, down the hill.

As a student who was used to being successful in school, who saw education as a way to get the life he wanted, Javier was upset when learning English was difficult, he felt angry and directed the anger at himself:

So I feel angry at myself, not because I was failing, but I feel angry because I knew that I could do it, but I... Sometimes I'm just closed into my bubble, and I couldn't look forward just like that. And I feel like, well, I can't do this, I gotta go back [to Mexico]. I was always angry at myself. My anger at myself, like when I didn't see the answers. I had the answer right here in front of me, but I couldn't see it. I had examples. I had the teacher. I had everything, but I couldn't see them. So I was angry at myself. Just more than angry. Desperate at the same time.

Javier reported this period of his life as lasting for the first semester that he was in high school in the United States.

Rosa, Roberto, and Lydia talked about often feeling "confused" in the early weeks and months of working to learn English and of feeling frustrated when they could not see that they were making progress. Rosa talked about being very discouraged by what she saw as her lack of progress in learning English, but keeping her goal of a college education in mind, and remembering how much she had already worked in Mexico to do well

academically, kept her from “throwing out” her education because of the difficulty of learning English. Javier and Anh talked about feeling “lost.” Tam said that at the beginning of his first months in the U.S., when he understood almost nothing, he felt like an “outcast.”

The fear that their classmates would laugh at them when they made a mistake in English was common among high-school-age English language learners that I taught in the past. The students in this study who learned English in high school all mentioned the fear of making mistakes, embarrassment or shyness as part of their experience of learning English, either as something that they felt or something that they consciously decided not to let influence them. Javier talked about his feelings of embarrassment:

I feel embarrassed. [I thought] making a mistake will provoke the other people, make [them] laugh at me, make fun of me. I don't like that. So I always feel angry about that. That was my biggest thing, the language, language. And I was ashamed to talk and to express myself. You never know what are people going to think about you. And [especially] when you're not speaking that well, when you use one word and you have to use another word, or the appropriate word, and stuff like that, and that something that [caused me to] get, like all disappointed and everything, frustrated and depressed.

Roberto and Anh talked about being nervous when they had to talk in front of a class.

Roberto linked his uncertainty about how to pronounce English words and his fear that other students would laugh at him:

In high school the class that really made me nervous was public speaking because when I step up in the front of the class to talk in front of everybody, it was hard. Because I didn't know how to pronounce the words very good and at the same time I got nervous, and that's another thing about why I didn't do good in that class—because I was nervous a long time.

When I asked Roberto what he feared would happen if he mispronounced words, he replied, “Well, the way I saw it was I thought maybe the other people were going to laugh or something. That's why I was more nervous about talking in front of the class.” He passed public speaking with a C, which was very difficult for him. It was hard, he said, not because the work itself was so difficult, but because of his fear about what students would

think about the way he pronounced English. He reported that he often had a speech prepared, but he wouldn't stand up to speak in front of everyone. Cristina said that one of the reasons she did not take more advanced English classes in high school, classes that included native speakers, was that she was afraid that students would laugh at her pronunciation if she was asked to read aloud.

Strategies for Learning English

In addition to talking about their problems with learning English, the students talked about the strategies they used to improve their English. Eddie talked about his experience of becoming a more confident, proficient speaker of English.

I [stayed] with that [teacher], level 5 and level 6, and he was the one who got me to have a conversation. Because it used to be, you could tell me everything in but that [teacher], he would be like, you're going to have a conversation here. You're going to be presenting this work in front of the class, and I don't want to hear Spanglish. I just want to hear English. And if you don't know the word, ask me. Don't be ashamed. . . . And he knew Spanish, so I could ask him, what's this? And he would say to me, I read this book. You'll like it. Try it. He made that confidence in me, and that's how I improved my English.

From Eddie's recounting of this experience, a picture of a supportive teacher emerges, a teacher with an understanding of his students' fears who created a challenging environment with clear expectations and language support. As Eddie continued his story, his lack of shyness and his lack of fear of embarrassment, perhaps a conscious decision, perhaps a personality trait, perhaps encouraged by the teacher, are part of what he credits as important in his learning English.

I'm not shy. I stepped in front of the class, and if I messed up, well, I messed up. Nobody's perfect. It's like whatever. . . . And I wasn't ashamed. I wasn't afraid or shy to talk in English and not to pronounce it good. I was like, hey, if I pronounce this bad, just let me know how to pronounce it, so I can be like (whistles) learning myself. And later, they said I was improving and learning English in one year.

Tam, like Eddie, talked about his decision not to give in to feelings of embarrassment and made it clear that he saw not feeling embarrassed and nervous as important in learning English. He contrasted his attitude with that of some of his friends:

There was time when I spoke and nobody understand. (Laughs) But I try. I try to spoke. Just don't feel nervous. Try to spoke more than you can. So (laughs) maybe sorry for me they understand only a little bit, but I am happy with that. I know a lot of friends who came here for just a year, but they're just afraid to talk. Like why? They say that they cannot handle that because of nervous, embarrassed.

Tam made a connection between letting go of nervousness and fear of embarrassment and practicing English, making a case for the learner's responsibility in learning English: "If you're not going to practice, nobody [is] going to practice for you. You have to do that by your own."

Having English speaking friends was an important element in learning English for two students, Javier and Tam, as reported in the section "High School Friendships." Javier credited his friendships with bilingual speakers of English and Spanish as "pulling him out of his bubble" of isolation and helping him to learn English. Tam said that he thought being in a school where there were no other Vietnamese speakers helped him to learn the basics of English. The difficulty some students had with making friendships outside of their ethnic groups, as recounted by Roberto, Rosa, and Anh, in the "High School Friendships" section, may have slowed their progress in English.

When I asked Lydia about her strategies for learning when she had difficulty understanding English, she credited good teachers who encouraged her, but also said learning took a great deal of personal effort, which she did not see in all of her friends. She described one of her strategies as "paying attention" to what was being said. She also talked about using a dictionary and asking questions. In her experience, "taking responsibility" was also necessary for her learning. She felt anger at some of her friends

who had been in the U.S. longer than she and were not making rapid progress in learning English because she thought they were not taking responsibility. When Lydia was talking about why she thought she would be successful in higher education, she said:

Oh, I think because I like to give the best of me, and when I fell down, I don't stay on the floor. I stand up. How can I say? (softly) I got—courage? I don't like to lose. And I know that I have to learn how to lose, but I don't like to lose, so I give the best of me.

In my estimation, Lydia's soft-spoken courage and her determination to "give the best" of herself influenced her learning of language as well as other life lessons.

Like Lydia, Eddie thought that personal attitudes and decisions influenced the learning of English. His advice to other learners was to think of learning English as easy, not difficult:

They say that English is hard to learn, man, and this and that. I would say it's not hard if you don't think it that way. If you think, it's going to be easy, it's going to be easy, but if you get in your head it's going to be hard, it's going to be hard. That's your decision.

Anh and Javier told stories about how their parents motivated them to make the effort to learn English. Recalling the difficulty her family had in making basic arrangements for their lives when they first arrived in the U.S., Anh said they had a difficult time finding an apartment because they did not know English. When they were not treated fairly, they did not know how to complain. Anh related an experience of watching her mother deal with the clerk in the supermarket shortly after they had arrived in the U.S.:

It's really hard hard. But you know I learned a lot from my mom. She went to the [supermarket], and people just like scan stuff when she bought something. They scan, but the price [was] different [from] what they write on there. She just point her finger at the receipt and say, It's wrong! It's wrong! She didn't know how to speak English. I thought my mom can do this, so I can. I feel like, Wow! My mom's really tough! She didn't know even one single English word. I said she *said* it's wrong, but that's not right. She just point her finger at the receipt, and do like that (pointing at her open hand), [used] the gesture, and they understood what she tried to say. And she got the money back. And I feel, Wow!

Javier recalled a lesson he learned from his father, a lesson Javier said had become a guiding principle in his life. He related the lesson to the difficulty of learning a new language and making his way in a new country:

It's the most important experience that I had, you know. We were in Mexico, and one Christmas, I moved to high school over there, and I started looking at the other clothes and sportswear and tennis shoes that the other people were wearing. I asked my dad, "Hey, you know what? I want those, Dad." And he was like, "Oh well, you know what? You have to work to achieve them. You should work hard and get your money and buy all the stuff that you want, so you have to work for them. I mean then you have to learn how to earn your money to achieve other things that you want. And you have to learn how to never give up because you will always have to struggle to get the things that you want."

Javier's father was admonishing the young Javier to work for the material possessions he wanted and not to expect to have things handed to him. Javier applied the lesson to life's problems and viewed the encounter with his father as a formative one:

You always have to work and never give up because always you're going to feel depressed that you fail and everything, but you never have to give up. You always have to fight. . . . That was the experience that shaped my personality, I would say.

Students' Conceptual Understandings of Language Learning

In their stories about learning English, students focused more on oral proficiency than on listening, reading, or writing skills. Roberto and Rosa focused even more narrowly on pronunciation. Roberto identified the mismatch between English pronunciation and English spelling as a source of great confusion for him and his fellow students in his high school English language classes. He thought that English reading instruction in high school should have given him more instruction in how to pronounce words. Rosa said that the most difficult thing about learning English for her was pronunciation. She thought that pronunciation was the reason that people did not understand her. When I asked Roberto how he would describe his English at the beginning of his first semester of college, he again talked mainly about oral proficiency and mentioned listening comprehension. He did not bring up reading and writing. He assessed his English in these words: "Right now I

don't think I speak it that good, but I think I can handle a conversation with someone else and I can understand my teachers. It's easier now for me." When I pressed him to talk about his reading and writing, he commented that he had trouble with spelling.

Eddie's story of learning English showed a natural progression in language learning and some consciousness of affective aspects of language learning. Eddie remembered that his listening comprehension developed faster than his ability to express his ideas in English. He said, "You could tell me everything in English, and I would understand it, but I wouldn't know how to answer you back." As he moved from one level of English class to another, His teacher in a more advanced level helped him to move to stronger oral proficiency. Said Eddie, "That [teacher], level 5 and level 6, was the one who got me to have a conversation." In the upper levels, Eddie remembered the teacher emphasizing not only English speaking, but reading and writing as well. He also credited the teacher with building his confidence and linked that confidence to improved English:

Then when I got to that class, we started doing essays and we started doing all kinds of work and reading more books, and that's why I got to learn more. And he would say to me, I read this book. You'll like it. Try it. He made that confidence in me and that's how I improved my English.

Javier, Tam, and Anh conceptualized language learning as inclusive of more than their listening and speaking skills. All three of them talked about oral proficiency, but not in terms of pronunciation. They talked about their inability or increasing ability to express their ideas and to communicate effectively. Javier talked about paying attention to language structures: "I start like listening to how other people were using verbs that I don't even know." At the beginning of the college semester, Javier and Anh talked about translation as one of the ways in which they handled the challenges of English. Javier said that he used translation in communicating with his bilingual girlfriend. He described his process, "She always talked to me in English, so I was translating the English to Spanish, and then I was

translating my answer from Spanish to English." Anh said that when she had to write essays in English, she first wrote them out entirely in Vietnamese and then translated them into English. Tam, who was planning to transfer to a 4-year school, viewed the remedial and general education courses he planned to take at the community college as a chance to "focus, to finish the English, to get the English, to get up to the English level, to not waste time. Then I'll transfer to [a university]. That's what I focus on right now."

A Language Teacher's Reaction

Students' experiences as language learners have strong personal resonances for me. Having lived in another country and learned a second language as a young adult, just 3 or 4 years older than most of these students, I can recall similar feelings of anger and frustration. As an experienced teacher of English as a Second Language, I want others to hear their voices. These students, now that they have found their voices in English, can help educators to understand the emotions and isolation students just beginning to learn English may be feeling. They remind us of the importance of creating emotionally supportive environments for language learners at all levels of schooling.

Students reported the influence of peers on language learning. Educators have responsibility for creating environments that reduce the fear of making mistakes. They can encourage and orchestrate opportunities for cross-language conversations and friendships.

I was struck by some students' view of language learning as defined mainly by oral proficiency. I see two implications for language teachers. Students see gaining confidence and fluency in speaking as a major indicator of language proficiency. Teachers need to give students many opportunities to develop their English speaking skills. Students would also benefit from an understanding of the process of language acquisition. Knowing more about the process might help them to deal more easily with emotions like anger, frustration, confusion, and self-doubt. Students in the early stages of language learning would benefit

from hearing about the experiences of more advanced learners like Eddie, Javier, Rosa, Anh, and Tam.

Finally, the voices of these language learners call into question some of the assumptions educators might make about the English language learners in their classroom. Javier and Rosa came from Mexico with strong academic backgrounds, a fact that went unrecognized by some of the educators in their schools. Making assumptions about the educational history of students who come to U.S. school from Mexico can result in mistaken placements and low expectations. I wish for these students and others like them the recognition of the intellectual and academic achievement that language learning represents. Rather than remedial learners, they are way ahead of many Americans in mastering a second language.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Some students reported involvement in extra-curricular activities. These activities figured in students' sense of themselves. When these activities fall away as students move into college, students may experience some sense of loss.

Sports

High school sports are often touted as ways of engaging students in school and providing opportunities to learn important life skills like teamwork. Four of the male students mentioned sports as playing some role in their lives during high school. None of the female students talked about sports. Michael's stories of his involvement in sports cast adults in a poor light. Armando's story was one of conflict of work and school commitments. Tam credited his involvement with high school sports with helping him to learn valuable life lessons.

Michael said that he excelled in football, basketball, and track. His talent in sports got him a lot of attention in the small, southern, rural town where he spent most of his

youth. According to Michael, his athletic prowess was more highly valued by the adults in the school than his learning. He reported that because he was a talented athlete whose leadership was needed for the basketball team to win, he was allowed to get away with smoking marijuana at school, skipping class, and bullying other students. Michael said the lenient stance of school adults toward his behavior made him "nervous." Michel wanted adults to enforce rules for his behavior, and he wanted to participate in sports, although it appears that the former may have ruled out the latter, at least in the short run.

Armando got a job as soon as he turned 16 so that he could buy a car and keep it running. However, he was ambivalent about the decision to get a job because it affected his involvement in school activities, especially soccer. When he started to work, he had to curtail his participation in school activities:

Well, I gave up a lot of things. I was getting involved in school. I had to miss pep rallies, games. I always liked to play soccer. Then the next season I couldn't play because I had to work. Well, I could have still played but [then] I only can work like on the weekends. And that's not gonna be enough to pay my expenses.

He said that the pressure to work came from the males in his extended family, more from his uncles than from his father. Armando did not feel pressure to get a job from his mother, who often gave him money to pay his expenses. In retrospect, Armando said that he "could have done without the car."

In contrast to Michael's story, Tam's account of what he learned from playing tennis was a very positive one. He said that playing tennis was one of the areas in his life in which he had experienced success, placing 2nd in the city's high school singles tournament. Having recovered from a life-threatening illness as a small child, Tam thought that tennis was valuable to him because it helped him to become physically strong. He also believed that tennis taught him about dealing with life. Although he no longer played tennis competitively because the community college had no tennis team, Tam said, "I learned a

lot. Like patience. [Like] using your mind while you're playing because it's really helpful if your mind can figure out a way to win." When I asked him to explain how tennis taught him patience, he talked about what he had observed with other players:

Like, you know, I know a lot of players—those are my friends. They don't have patience. I know that because look at the way they play. They easy to get angry when they have to face the opponents that are really good or who are really patient, too. [You have to] stay cool, calm down, pick a right time to hit the right spot. Yeah. You know my friends, they don't have the patience because they just keep killing themselves by hit hard and the ball is out of the court, so they don't have the patience. And they get angry, too. After that, they get angry. So that's why they cannot become a good player.

School Leadership Activities

Laurence mentioned being involved in tennis and baseball while he was in high school, but he described his leadership in student clubs and non-athletic activities in more detail than his participation in sports. Laurence was treasurer of student government, editor-in-chief of the high school yearbook, and president of a student club. Participation in those activities played a big role in how Laurence saw himself reflected in the eyes of others:

When I was a senior, most of the teachers, well, probably a lot of the teachers, knew that I was a leader. The student body saw me as like the greatest role model ever because I was involved in sports and in clubs, and I was a leader in student government.

He believed that other students looked to student leaders as role models and as students who could gain support for change. He said that he worked hard to do his best so that others would see him as a leader.

Moving into leadership positions was not easy for Laurence. He reported being nervous whenever he took on new responsibilities and felt proud that he progressed from being a very "scared," very "confused" high school freshman to his place as a high school leader. He talked about the challenge: "[I felt] anxious or nervous every time I stepped into

a leadership position. Being [yearbook] editor-in-chief is not that easy. You have to know a lot of things, get along with a lot of people.” He thought that he was willing to go through the nervousness because he knew that he would learn new skills, gain the respect of others, and become more confident. For Laurence the emotions “proud and powerful and nervous and anxious” were all linked. He credited teachers and friends with providing the support and encouragement he needed to take on leadership roles.

Memorable Experiences with Teachers and Counselors

Students stories are reminders of the power of relationships with adults to shape students’ perceptions of themselves and the role of education in their lives. Students reported both negative and positive experiences with teachers and counselors. Positive experiences appeared to outweigh the negative ones. If the opposite had been true, perhaps these students would not have been looking forward to college.

Negative Experiences

Some students reported negative experiences with teachers in high school. As already reported, Anh was kicked out of class on her first day of high school in the U.S. when she did not understand the teacher’s directions. Armando reported that some teachers did not expect him to graduate. Michael lacked respect for the teachers in his small, rural high school, seeing them as poorly educated. Roberto gave examples of an English language teacher who did not explain English pronunciation well and who left him and his fellow English learners feeling “confused” and a science teacher who only gave reading assignments, but did not explain concepts to students in ways that they could understand.

Carlos reported losing respect for his English literature teacher in the 10th grade. He believed that he was misunderstood and treated unfairly by the teacher. Carlos reported, “Most of the time, he completely ignored me.” One time when Carlos resorted to asking a

fellow student a question because the teacher would not respond to him, the teacher kicked him out of class. Carlos continued his story of what happened with what I interpreted as a lingering sense of bewilderment, "like he really didn't like me, so he like threw me out of class, and like he cussed me out." As a result, Carlos stopped going to that class. The consequences were that "[the teacher] failed me. He failed me that class." Carlos reported the conflict to a high school counselor who told him that "a lot of people had had complaints on [that teacher]." The counselor gave Carlos a second chance to take the class test, and he was able to pass. The teacher retired the following year.

Nearly three years later, aspects of this experience still bothered Carlos. First, he felt misunderstood. This teacher, like some other people, said Carlos, reacted to him similarly. He commented:

Like they think I'm like, just like, I guess a gang banger supposedly. And like they don't really know me. They think I'm just always messing around and stuff. But... like the teachers that got to know me, they really liked me at the end.

Carlos observed that he looked like most of the students at his high school who got into trouble:

A lot of people too, like, they look at me, and just really don't like me. Until they know me. Because they see me with tattoos, piercings and everything like that. . . . Most of the people in that school that were like bad looked like me. Yeah like, they thought I was like just one of them. But like to [the teacher I had this problem with], I don't know. In 10th grade I was like a normal kid. And I still don't know why, but from like 11th grade and on, I just started changing. But like I was still like the same person. But I just looked different, that's all.

Secondly, Carlos thought that he had made an effort to come to an understanding with the teacher, trying to "give it a chance" and staying after school to ask for help. However, according to Carlos, the teacher always had "someplace to go" or other students to help. The teacher connected with some students, according to Carlos, but not with him. He described the other students, the ones the teacher engaged with: "Yeah, most of them

were like the ... what do you call it, they're in this little club, I don't remember what it's called, The Honor Society or something like that."

Finally, Carlos regretted not challenging the teacher when he was kicked out of class. Carlos thought the teacher should have reacted differently to the incident:

He could have just told me to leave or something, or just to stop talking. But he like took it to a whole, like to another level. And to actually cuss me out and kick me out of class. That like got me really mad.

Carlos felt "disappointed" in himself because he walked out of class without responding to the teacher:

I was even disappointed that day too. Because I didn't even like tell him nothing back. I just walked out of his class without even saying anything. . . I wouldn't have cussed him out or anything, I wouldn't have screamed at him. I don't know, try to talk to him like why he did that. Something like that.

Positive Experiences with Teachers

Luckily for Carlos, positive experiences outweighed negative experiences with high school teachers, as they did in the reports of almost all students in the study, with the exception of Michael's. Teachers' dedication to their work and their students, the encouragement they offered, the interest they took in students' lives, the connections they helped students to make to their communities and future careers mattered deeply to students.

In addition to the 10th grade teacher with whom he had the conflict described above, Carlos recalled a 10th grade teacher who impressed him with her dedication to teaching and to her students. After the teacher's mother died, she returned to work after a week's absence. That she returned after so short a time Carlos found remarkable. She talked with her students about her feelings and told them she was really happy to be back with them. From the teacher's words and actions, Carlos concluded, "She was dedicated to what she did. Like she was devoted to us and everything. Like she even said she would

do anything to like get us somewhere in life.” He felt good about her openness to continued contact with him: “Yeah, to this day she still talks to me. Yeah, and like she says if I need anything, any help or anything, just go to her.” Similarly, Cristina talked about how she went back to one of her high school teachers for help with her college math class. She considered two of her high school teachers “friends.”

At times during high school, frustrated by the difficulty of learning English, Lydia thought she wanted to return to Mexico. She persevered, she said, because of the encouragement of her teachers. She described the encouragement and its effect on her: “They were always like, you can do it, keep going, Lydia. And we are so proud of you because you are doing good in school. And that makes me feel so good—great.”

Five students—Lydia, Cristina, Carlos, Armando, and Laurence—saw the role that teachers played in orchestrating for them experiences that helped them to connect learning and school activities to their communities. Most of these experiences were described earlier. One of Lydia’s teachers connected her to a community action group working on high school reforms to make schools better for immigrant students. One of Carlos’ teachers connected the history of oppression to present day oppression in sweatshops around the world. As a result, Carlos got involved in a letter-writing campaign and a public protest action. One of the high school activities Laurence was proud of was his leadership of a small community service student club that raised funds, which they then used to make grants to non-profit agencies. He credited the student excursion he took to a rescue mission and the example of the teacher who arranged the trip for opening his eyes to the value of community service.

In the section “School Leadership Activities,” I described how Laurence dared to move into positions of leadership in his high school even though he was very nervous. He talked about how “proud and powerful and nervous and anxious” were emotions he felt

simultaneously about being editor-in-chief of the yearbook or speaking in front of the student body. The high school environment provided Laurence with what Kegan (1982, 1994) and Kegan and Lahey (2001) call a “holding environment,” a safe place to try out new ways of being in the world and to test the assumptions that led to Laurence’s nervousness about moving into student leadership positions. Teachers and friends supported and encouraged Laurence as he tried out responsibilities that he was not sure he could do.

Carlos told a similar story of a high school experience that allowed him to try out speaking in front of strangers. Before this experience, Carlos said, “I used to be just terrified” of speaking in front of a big group of people. In a job exploration class in his high school, the teacher brought community leaders into the school to listen to students’ final project presentations. Carlos remembered having sweaty hands, that the paper with his notes was shaking as he held it. Before students had to speak, they got a chance to meet the community representatives. That helped Carlos to feel more comfortable with them. The community representatives also told Carlos not to read from his paper, but to be himself, and to tell his story in his own words. Carlos took their advice. He recalled the experience:

I was telling my own versions about what I had to tell them. [The experience] helped me [because] it took me away from being scared off to speaking to people. Especially important people. They’re like anybody else. Just talk how you normally talk. Just tell them what you have to tell them.

Armando, like several other students, recounted an experience in high school that engaged his interest. On the first day I met Armando, he talked in an informal conversation about his involvement in a club for students interested in business and the opportunities that involvement gave him to travel around the state. The teacher who encouraged his involvement in the club and the experience in the club were closely linked in Armando’s

telling of this experience during the extended interview I had with Armando a few weeks later. The teacher, said Armando, “saved my life.”

Armando was placed in Miss Davis’s marketing class because he had already been kicked out of other classes. He recounted his inauspicious start in Miss Davis’s class:

So, I got in there and like, I sat down. I knew a couple people in that class, and, like right away, I got into a tough attitude. Yeah, and like the teacher kicked me out right away, Miss Davis did. [She told me,] “Come back whenever you want to learn.” So I left. And then like the next day I just came and I was like “Oh I’m ready to learn,” but I was like sarcastic.

Somehow, Miss Davis and Armando weathered the rough start. At some point, Armando became interested in the subject matter of the marketing class and joined DECA, a club for high school and college students interested in marketing and management. Armando recalled his increasing engagement:

But then like that year, like I don’t know, like I really got involved in that class [and] DECA and going around to competitions and wearing ties and doing all this. . . . And like, well, I thought, big opportunity, and I could learn all the things from there. So, the next year I took it. . . . From there I started learning about the competitions they go to and what they do.

The competitions provided Armando the chance to travel in the state, to learn and practice knowledge and behaviors important in the business world, and to meet new people. The success he experienced in the competitions was not immediate, but he saw his skills and knowledge growing. In addition, he made friends and gained confidence in his ability to interact competently in an environment outside school. Armando described a competition:

So the first competition I went to was in Glenwood Springs. And, well, it was my first time, and I thought it was fun. You meet a lot of new people. You get a lot of background from real life, real situations and I was doing quick service. Well I was like supposed to be a manager of a quick service [business]. That was my topic [for the competition]. I didn’t win anything but I liked it. It was a fun experience. Then our next one was up in the mountains. It was fun, too.

Finally, Armando was able to qualify for the state competition at an historic, luxury hotel in another city, where he place fourth in the competition.

Armando gained confidence from his participation in the trips. He also took pride in what he learned and saw a connection between the learning and the job he worked at in high school and during his first semester in college. Armando said earlier in the interview that for most of his time in high school he was satisfied with his academic work if he got a D. His experience in DECA contrasted sharply with his do-as-little-work-as-possible approach to much of his academic work in high school. He talked about his learning in DECA:

You learn new things. Like I believe I know more stuff than any manager at McDonalds because I went to that. I studied everyday at least an hour, getting ready for competitions, and I just thought I learned so much from it. And that really helped me out, especially at work now. [When] people go and try to complain or anything, I know how to handle them. If I could be a manager right now, I could be a good manager.

Armando reflected on his experience with Miss Davis and the positive influence she had on his life. She showed interest in his personal life, behaving like a “mom,” insisting that Armando bring his new girlfriend to meet her. She helped him make connections between his after school job and school life, by going with him to ask his employer to support his participation in DECA competitions with a flexible work schedule and money for travel. She helped him to stretch, to move into unfamiliar territory by providing a holding environment, a safe space for trying new ways of being in the world. Armando summed up Miss Davis’s influence in this way:

[On] that first day that I met her, I thought she was going to be like the worst teacher ever, getting on my nerves. But after going everywhere with her [for the DECA competitions], she really changed my life. She really made me believe in myself. [She helped me understand that] everybody around me, that didn’t matter. It was just me, and it was my decision to make good decisions, not anybody else. So, I really think like she’s a good teacher. She really pushed me forward. . . . She really got involved, like to save my life. She really helped me out, and just she was a great influence in my life as well.

Connections to Future Careers

Several students reported thinking about future careers while they were in high school. In the cases of Cristina, Javier, and Carlos, experiences during the high school years were clear influences on their deliberations about careers. Cristina participated in a youth outreach program sponsored by the police in her community. She had the opportunity to accompany police officers on patrol, to be present at crime scenes, and to participate in a search for a body. As she started college, she was considering becoming an FBI agent. As a high school student in Mexico, Javier was considering a career in math and engineering, but after observing a bilingual counselor at the high school he attended in the U.S., he was thinking about the possibility of becoming a bilingual teacher. For Carlos, art classes in high school gave him a chance to develop his artistic talents. The art teacher, who recognized Carlos' artistic talent, was able to talk him out of dropping out of high school and made connections between art and higher education by talking to Carlos about how college had helped him to develop his own art. Carlos was interested in pursuing a double major in graphic arts and business.

However, not many students talked about making clear connections between their high school experiences and the careers and majors they were considering as they began college. Roberto, for instance, said he enjoyed math classes, biology class, and auto mechanics. Math and biology were fun for him, and auto mechanics gave him practical knowledge that he needed to fix his own car. However, he was interested in a career in law enforcement, a choice that appeared, at least in part, to be influenced by the media. He enjoyed watching courtroom reality shows on television and thought he had a talent for anticipating the judge's advice and decisions. Laura learned about animals from television and from having pets. Her love of animals fed her interest in veterinary medicine, but she made no connection of these interests or consideration of careers to her high school

experience. Rosa loved and excelled in chemistry and mathematics in high school, but she was considering a career in psychology. Although he was involved in the marketing club in high school and his family had advised him to study accounting, Armando was considering nursing as a career at the beginning of his first semester in college. The fact that these students did not make connections between high school and career options suggests that career choice is influenced by many factors. In the section "Looking Forward to College," students' ideas about majors and careers are discussed in more detail, including the influence of their families.

Experiences with High School Counselors

As with high school teachers, students reported both negative and positive experiences with high school counselors, but once again positive experiences outweighed negative experiences in students' stories about high school. Rosa and Javier reported frustration with counselors who placed them in classes that they had already finished and excelled in while they were in Mexico and who did not think they could learn English as quickly as they did. However, Rosa found a counselor who allowed her to move more quickly through English language classes. Carlos' counselor arranged for him to retake a test in the class he had been kicked out of because of a conflict with the teacher. Laurence reported that one of his counselors helped him to deal with the emotional turmoil of his parents' divorce during his junior year.

Counselors connected Anh and Javier to scholarship opportunities they would not have found on their own. Anh's counselor helped her to revise her essay for the scholarship she was awarded. Javier worked with a counselor who encouraged him to attend college in the U.S., even though Javier had thought it would not be financially feasible for him. She helped him to find scholarships that would allow him to attend a

community college. Knowing that he could get a scholarship affected his attitude toward his classes during his senior year:

The first semester was like, you know, whatever. But the second half of my senior year, I was like, I want to start my future. I really want to go to college, and let's see what happens, and I want to get involved right here [in the U.S.].

Suggestions for Improving High School

Four students offered suggestions for improving high schools for students in the future. The suggestions included after-school programs designed to help students think about their goals for the future, advice for teachers, students, and principals, and a call to hold students to higher academic standards.

Roberto's suggestion for change reflected his own struggle to see the relevance of academic work to his life. For most of his high school years he did not really believe that people like him could reach higher goals:

In high school, the way I saw things was negative because I thought that you never was going to be able to accomplish nothing. But now I see if you want to do something, and you really want it, you'll be able to succeed, if you pay more attention, too, and if you want to learn. In high school, [I didn't see things that way, and] that's why I didn't learn that much.

Only after being out of high school for a year did he decide to try higher education as a way to reach goals he had set for himself. When I asked him how he would improve high school to better serve students like himself, he suggested designing an after-school program that would guide students to think and "plan more clearly what they want to do in life." Roberto thought the program should be voluntary, and that word-of-mouth among friends would get more students interested in it. Roberto was not certain such a program would make a difference, but he thought "if you tell them or if you explain to them more, like deep, I think they'll keep it in mind and think about it a little bit at least." He thought such a program might have made a difference for him in planning for college because, based on the information he got in high school, he was not sure that he wanted to go to college because

he had no idea what college was like, how much it cost, and how he would be able to pay for it.

Carlos had advice for teachers and students that he thought would improve high schools. His advice grew out of the experiences he had, both positive and negative, with teachers and their perceptions of him. To teachers, Carlos said, "Take some time and learn what [the students] are about, who they are." He said that his art teacher "took a lot of time" with him. As an example of the difference a teacher's attention can make in the life of a student, Carlos recalled a student his art teacher had worked with in earlier years, a student who was a "druggie" and would only attend art class. The art teacher "got started talking to him, and he actually got him to change." That student became a Web page designer and had sent the art teacher an e-mail thanking him for the difference he had made in his life. In summary, Carlos said, "Just take some time with kids, especially problem kids."

Carlos did not place all the responsibility for improvement on the shoulders of teachers. Students, too, had some responsibility in his view. A lot of students, he said are "hard-headed" and "think they can do anything." Carlos advised students to try to see the situation differently, and "if you know you have a problem, try to talk to someone that will hear you."

Lydia's views were more wide-ranging than the suggestions of other students and probably reflected her engagement in organized school reform efforts. She was involved in organizing student groups for reform in 3 city high schools and had recently attended a meeting with the district superintendent of schools. Most high schools, in Lydia's estimation, teach at a low level and are not preparing students for college, making it necessary for students to take "extra classes" in college. High schools should teach a higher level, college-preparatory curriculum. The principal is responsible for bringing about

change, said Lydia. Teachers need to stay “current” and change their teaching methods.

About teachers, Lydia said:

A lot of them don't want to change the way they teach. And that's a big problem because the world is changing every day. It's changing. And, well, I think that this year [the high school I attended] is changing a lot because those teachers that didn't want to be changed, they quit. And the principal got some more teachers. I don't know if they are teaching well, but I will see. And I think it's the principal's responsibility.

Lydia saw another recent change at the high school she attended. High school students now had the “opportunity” to earn college credits while still in high school.

While she saw the principal as primarily responsible for change in a school, she took an activist's stance. She recalled other problems with teachers and the influence that her group had on the principal:

And in [the high school I graduated from], we got some problems with teachers. They were so racist with Hispanic students, and we demanded things with the principal. We got the one teacher to be fired because they were so mean. We also tried to do changes in school about the education, but [the current principal] had some changes already. We are seeing that every change goes in a good way. And if one of those changes [doesn't go well], we're going to take them and make them go in a good way.

Echoing her concerns about some teachers' “racist” behavior toward Hispanic students, she also observed tensions between African-American and Hispanic students in her high school. She said the student groups are “so separate” and “don't share things with each other.” The plan of action for the current year at the high school was to work with the African-American principal as “a partner” to “have a union between the two cultures.”

Like Lydia, Tam commented on low academic standards in high schools. “The high schools here in the United States, I think they all have to change to be hard and not easy like this.” He compared college to a big swimming pool. Students from easy high schools would not know how to swim in the college pool, he said, and “how can [you] survive if you don't know how to swim?”

Summary

Students' reflections on their high school experiences are informative for high school and college educators. Graduating from high school is a source of great pride for students and their families. Educators need to find ways to foster a peer climate that encourages academic engagement rather than discourages it. When students leave their home countries and move to the U.S., they face challenges to their emotions and identities, in addition the challenge of learning a new language. Relationships with adults, either positive or negative, have a strong influence on high school students' developing sense of self. Involvement in activities like sports, visits to community organization, jobs, clubs are memorable learning experiences for students in which they can test their assumptions about the world and gain confidence in their ability to interact in contexts outside the classroom. Students bring rich and interesting experiences with them to college. College educators can connect to that experience instead of focusing on skills deficits and disparaging or disregarding students' high school experiences. Finally, listening to student voices can inform school change efforts.

CHAPTER 5

LOOKING FORWARD TO COLLEGE

At the beginning of the semester, students were reflecting on their high school experiences and looking forward with a good deal of hope and some trepidation to attending college. Through the early interviews with students and through participation in a discussion with about half of the students on the second day of class, I got a sense of the some of the influences on students' decisions to come to college, their families' stances toward their decisions, their ideas about how going to college would benefit them, and the mix of hopes and fears with which they started their first college classes. This chapter helps to answer the first research question about how students view themselves in relationship to learning, college, and careers at the beginning of their first semester in college.

The Decision to Come to College

Going to college, like graduating from high school, was not something that any of the students in these two classes took for granted. Going to college was a choice, and in many cases a tentative one. The choice was influenced by adults from high school, made in reference to families, sometimes in opposition to peers, and for some of the recent immigrants as an alternative to the universities in their home countries.

Influence of High School Adults.

Counselors and teachers in high school were influential in some students' decision to come to college, possibly to a greater extent than reported by students. Because I did not ask students directly about the decision to come to college, I only have data on

students who chose to talk about their decision. Carlos cited the influence of his art teacher who talked with him about how going to college had influenced his art. Carlos recalled that conversation during his junior year of high school as being the first time he had entertained seriously the idea of going to college. Four students were part of a special program at their high school designed to encourage immigrant students to go to college and to provide ongoing support from high school counselors during their first year at college. High school counselors helped Anh and Javier to find scholarships. Cristina with her honor student status and Laurence in his role as a student leader had planned on college from early in their high school years.

Roberto was one student who appeared to have finished high school with very little counseling about going to college. During the year after his graduation from high school, Roberto worked in agriculture, like his father and brothers. As reported earlier, Roberto said, "I wasn't sure that I wanted to come because I didn't know how it was at college, how much we had to pay and everything. So, when I graduated, I waited for a year." Afternoons when he was playing basketball, he met another player, an immigrant from Mexico like Roberto, who was a student with a work study job in the community college recruiting office. He talked with Roberto about the option of going to college and walked Roberto through the first steps of testing, advising, and registering.

Family Influence and Support

While high school teachers and counselors probably influenced students decisions to come to college, students talked more about their families' stances toward the decision. The students in the study fell into 5 groups, with some overlap, in respect to family influence on their decisions to come to college. Several students said that one or both parents supported their decisions. Some of that group reported a lack of support from members of their extended family. A small group of students appeared to have no support

from family for their decisions. Among the students who were parents, a sense of responsibility to their children played a role in their decisions. From 6 students, I collected no data on the question of family influence on their decision to come to college.

Parental Support

Eleven of the students mentioned in interviews or informal conversation that one or both of their parents supported their decisions to attend college. Two additional students did not say directly that their parents supported their decision to attend college, but like some of the other 11 students, they saw attending college and earning a degree as a way to help out family members financially in the future.

Two students gave their parents a lot of credit for their decisions to attend college. Dave's parents traveled from the East Coast to help him check out the community college, make sure that he would get learning support in light of his learning disabilities, and help him to find an apartment. Omar's parents encouraged him to go to college immediately after high school even though he thought he wanted to work for a couple of years before starting college:

Before I enrolled in college, I thought, I don't know, I will look for a job. . . . I thought when I finish high school, I can get a job, and I can go back to school after 2 years or 1 year when I get money. But my parents talked to me about this and they told me, you will see in 2 years or 3 years [that you will have] been working, and getting a paycheck, and still you don't have money. And you'll feel regret, or you'll feel miserable or something, so still feeling that, we encourage you to go to college. Then I agreed with them.

Three students mentioned that their going to college was a source of pride for their parents. Tam said that one of the reasons for his decision to attend college was that as the only child in his family, he wanted to "be successful and make his parents proud" of him. Both Cristina and Roberto mentioned that their mothers were proud that they were going to college, but Cristina's mother worried about her possible choice to become a police officer

because of the danger and Roberto said his mother was not convinced that he would be a responsible, successful college student because of his behavior in high school.

One student mentioned support from one parent, but a lack of it from another.

Laurence said that his mother was very supportive of his decision to attend college, but that his father was not:

My mom believes in me. She has faith in me. But my dad doesn't. My dad is the opposite. He probably doesn't even know the way he expresses it, but like sometimes he wants to give me support, but sometimes he's, oh, no, you can't make it. It's like an emotion that he has that is confused probably towards higher education.

Extended Family Influence

Laura and Carlos talked about extended family support for the decision to go to college. A relative who was a nurse provided opportunities for Laura to shadow her on the job to find out if she was interested in studying nursing. A male relative encouraged Carlos to attend college because he had not attended. The relative was convinced that attending college would have helped him in his work in drafting. Anh mentioned that her brother had promised her financial support so that she could attend college. Theresa's younger sisters, who were both in college, encouraged her to start college after being out of school for several years while she raised her four daughters.

On the other hand, Laurence and Cristina reported experiences with extended family that were non-supportive, even critical of their decisions to attend college. As reported previously, Laurence was ridiculed by his cousins working construction for being serious about finishing high school and going to college. Cristina, whose mother was very supportive of her going to college, felt some guilt that she was not earning more money to help her mother, a single mother of two, to support the family. One of Cristina's uncles criticized her decision to attend college, telling her that people were lying to her about how

education would help her get a better-paying job and, that as a good daughter, she ought to get a full-time job now to help her mother buy a house.

Lack of Family Support

Michael, Jimmy, and Armando appeared to have no family support for attending college. Both Jimmy and Michael were estranged from some members of their family and had a troubled history in their relationships with family. Armando reported that while his parents thought it was important to finish high school, they did not think going to college was important. According to Armando, his parents had not shown interest in his education when he was in high school, and he did not expect them to show interest in his college education:

I never expect my mom to, or my family, to get into my education. I don't even tell them anymore like about school nights or something like that. [In high school,] they would like maybe go, but I don't know, they get bored because they don't understand everything [in English]. So, well, they never got into my education, they never got involved with it. I don't think they'll get involved in it now.

When I asked Armando if that attitude hurt him, he responded, "Well, yeah, but like I say, I'm already used to it, so, it's like whatever." In fact, he said, the decision to go to college was made in part to try to "prove them wrong."

Students with Parental Responsibilities

Five of the women in the class, Melissa, Angela, Tamara, Elena, and Adrienne, were mothers and a sixth one was pregnant with her first child. Michael was the only one of the men in the group who had childcare responsibilities. He was often responsible for picking cousins up from school and lived in a household with several small children. Children influenced their mothers' decision to come to college. Melissa, a mother of four, wrote about how her children influenced her decision:

I knew this was going to be a great challenge for me, being that the only reading and writing I would do was when I would help my children with their homework. I have four daughters. They are all in school, kindergarten, fourth grade, seventh

grade and ninth grade. Every night they come to me for help with their homework. Their homework started getting difficult for me. That is one of the reasons I decided to come back to school.

Angela talked about how her 2-year-old contributed to her decision to start college after five years in the U.S. work force:

When I had my son, I was thinking I need a better job, a better future for him. So he's the one that pushed me to do something. I should go do something. I should go back to school. So [I said to him], I'm going to do this for you. So now I'm doing this, so I'm really proud. I'm going to make this for you, for your future. . . . In a way, he's saying to me, Mommy, you're going to do good. I might be everywhere, messing with your homework, but you're going to do good.

Angela was dealing with an abusive relationship with her husband at the beginning of the semester, thinking of leaving him and moving to another state, and was especially conscious that she might soon be the sole financial support for her son. Her husband actively opposed her return to college by denying her the use of a car to travel to campus. Charlayne was also motivated to return to college by her children. Having lost custody of her three children due to her mental health problems, Charlayne was determined to become a nurse so that she could be financially independent and regain custody of her children.

Peers and the Decision to Go to College

Student data in this study indicate that for this group of students, adults from school and family played a bigger role than peers in the decision to come to college. A few students—Omar, Cristina, Tam, Javier, Dave, and Roberto—reported having at least one friend attending college. Tam and Javier viewed their relationships with their girlfriends as helping to keep them serious and disciplined about going to college. Cristina talked about sharing the nervousness of the first day of college with her friend who was enrolled in the university that shared a campus with the community college. Roberto said that three of his friends from high school were at the 4-year-college on the same campus, and a peer he

played basketball with after high school helped him to enroll at the community college.

Dave's friends were attending college, but in other states, and he had lost contact with all but one of them.

Some students said peers were not supportive in their decisions to come to college. Some of Laura's peers let her know that they did not expect her to go to college.

Laura, like Armando, said that she felt pressure "to prove" herself:

You know when I was younger, I always had something to prove. Like my mom and my dad never graduated high school and never finished college, and there was always kids that I talked to who said, oh, you're going to have a kid, and you're not going to go to college. So I always felt like I had to prove myself.

Armando said that he decided to apply for college in his senior year when all of his friends were going to college. However, of his close high school friends, he was the only one who ended up enrolling. He said he saw them on the streets. Most of them were working construction and making more money than Armando, a situation Armando was ambivalent about. They were making twice as much money as he was and able to buy things that looked attractive to Armando. However, Armando noted, "They're really working hard and getting burned outside in the sun." He said he did not want to be doing the kind of physical work his friends were doing.

Roberto reported that when he saw his high school friends on the street, they invited him to join them, but he was no longer interested in participating in those activities:

Like I still see my friends from high school, but they said let's do that, let's do this, and I said no. you can do that if you want to, but I'm not going to. We just talk, but I don't do the same things we used to do. . . . In high school I used to think what are they going to say if I do this or no. Like right now, I don't care about it that much because all I care is about my life and how I want it to be.

Difficulty of Getting into University in Mexico

For the three most recent Mexican immigrant students, Rosa, Javier, and Lydia, the possibility of returning to Mexico to attend university crossed their minds. All three of

them worried about their English proficiency and had some doubt about their ability to do college-level work in English. However, each of them rejected the option.

Rosa was very nervous on the first day of class at the community college because her fellow students spoke English with greater fluency and ease than she did. She considered dropping the class. Linda, her teacher, and I encouraged her to continue based on our experience of working with English language learners, knowing that if she had tested at this reading and English level, she very probably had the receptive language skills to learn in the class.

Lydia was also very nervous about her English proficiency and college-level work:

Before I start college I feel so so so nervous because I say, oh, my English! It's not perfect. And if you want to get good grades, or if you want to do well in school, you have to have perfect English. And I say, no, I don't want to go to college. I want to go to Mexico.

However, she then thought about the difficulty of getting admission to a Mexican university:

I start to think, what am I going to do in Mexico because it is too hard to get in university. I have to do a really really really hard test, and sometimes if you pass the test, you [still] don't go to the university because there is a limit [on the number of people who can be admitted to public universities].

There were more spaces for students in private schools, Lydia went on to explain, but private schools were too expensive. She had a tour of the community college campus, heard about the placement based on test scores into reading, English, and math classes to prepare for college-level work, and decided that the community college option was her "opportunity."

Javier considered returning to Mexico, finishing high school there, and applying for university, but because of the tiny percentage of applicants who get into Mexican universities, Javier thought his chances were small. In addition, he knew that he would then be separated from his parents and sister. After thinking about the choice for "a lot of nights," Javier decided to stay in the U.S. and find a way to study here. He saw an

additional advantage to staying in the U.S.—the chance to learn English really well, something that would be an advantage even if he decided to return to Mexico:

I know that it is not that easy because I am having to learn a new language. . . . If one day I decide to go back to Mexico, I want to be speaking both languages. I want to be having more facilities over there, you know, because over there, one of the things that they are asking for is speaking English. I asked Rosa directly why she wanted to study in the U.S. instead of Mexico. Like

Javier and Lydia she touched on the difficulty of getting in to Mexican universities, the scarcity of scholarships, and not wanting to be separated from her immediate family. In addition, she suggested that she was now on a different path than she had been before she moved to the U.S. and that she could not go back. Like Lydia, she viewed going to college in the U.S. as an opportunity:

Because I cannot go back and say as if nothing had happened after these 2 years, and it's not going to be the same thing. And here going to college is no problem, and I want to take advantage of the opportunity.

College as Opportunity

As described in the previous section, students' decisions to go to college were influenced by adults in school and by their families. In all cases except two, students in the study were choosing a path their parents had not taken. For the most part, students did not view going to college as an expected trajectory, as would many middle class 18-year-olds, nor as a path to follow because most of their peers were taking that path. Going to college was an "opportunity," a conscious choice. In this section I explore in more detail how students perceive college as opportunity.

Better Jobs

Community college educators hear frequently from community college students that their reason for coming to college is to get a better job. Many students believe that a college education provides a path to better jobs, jobs that would not be available to them

with only a high school education (Cox, 2004; Grubb & Cox, 2005). When students in this study talked about what they hoped to gain by going to college, many of them echoed this common refrain. Although some of them had very specific career goals, some who wanted better jobs did not know what they wanted to study or what kind of job they wanted to have after college. For a majority of the students in the study, going to college was seen as a way of gaining economic stability for themselves and their families.

Eleven of the 16 students I interviewed at the beginning of the semester talked about college as a path to jobs that paid well. For many of them, a “better” job meant in comparison to the jobs their parents or their peers had. Armando said that when he decided to come to college, despite not receiving encouragement from his parents, he saw the work that his high school friends were doing in construction, and he was sure that he did not want to be doing that work. He said that he asked himself, “Well, what am I going to end up doing with the rest of my life?” Roberto told me that when he was in high school, he did not pay a lot of attention to academic work. I asked him what he thought had brought about a change in his attitude to learning. He said he saw how hard his parents worked and how his brothers were only able to get jobs as agricultural workers. He decided that he wanted to have a different life:

I want to be something more than just any other worker. I want to have a major in something. That’s what made me change. And also because I see my brothers. Like when they just started looking for jobs, it was hard because they didn’t even graduate from high school, and every time when they asked them for their resume, all they used to say is they worked like in crops. That’s all they showed in their resumes and that they were not good enough or [experienced] enough for that job they were applying for.

Alex said he did not want to be “flipping burgers” for the rest of his life, that he did not want to “hate his job.”

Some educators have lamented this view of education, calling it utilitarian and complaining that students want education only for the material gains it will bring them.

However, students in this study were talking about the basic economic security that much of the U.S. middle class takes for granted. The desire for better jobs was not just in order to make their individual lives more comfortable as the next section illustrates.

Helping Family

Many of the students viewed a college education, and the resulting economic benefits, as a way to help their families. As mentioned earlier, mothers in the group viewed going to college as related to the responsibility they felt for their children. They connected a college education to better jobs and things that more money could buy for their children. However, the rewards of a better job went beyond a simple desire for money and material possessions. In addition to a better job and material possessions, Melissa thought that being better educated would allow her to help her children with their homework. Charlayne talked about how a job as a nurse would allow her to offer her children material things that they needed, a place to live when she was able to buy a house, and the chance for her to reunite with them by regaining custody. Angela thought that a college education would help her to get a job so that she would no longer have to live "paycheck to paycheck," but most importantly having more money would allow her to give her son more "opportunities" and a life with fewer "limitations." In addition to the mothers thinking of their children, two of the single males talked about having a college education as a means of supporting their future families and children.

Javier, Lydia, Rosa, and Cristina said that going to college and getting a "career" was a means to helping them support their families. Both Rosa and Lydia talked about the hard work that their parents did and the effects of the work on their health. They thought they would be called on to help out their parents financially in the future. Lydia talked about her feelings of responsibility toward her parents in a way that showed her assumption that many other young people felt the same obligation toward their parents:

Because my parents they have given me a lot of things, material things, and it's time for me to show them that I can be successful in this, in my life. And I also want to give them back and some things that they have given. Well, I know that each daughter, each son, they want to get a career and get a job, and then when they get money, they want to give to their parents. And that's what I want to do. I want to help my parents. Because they are not so young. My mom is sick, and my dad is getting problems, health problems. And I think that he's not going to work in some more years, so I'm going to try to help him.

Javier mentioned wanting to be in a position to help his family, especially his younger sister. This focus on his family, he said, helped him "to look forward always," instead of thinking of what he left behind in Mexico. He thought that his actions as a student would be a powerful example to his sister. "I've got to help her," Javier said, "give her a good example of what school can give her if she keeps studying."

The sense of responsibility toward the economic well-being of the extended family is part of the motivation many of the students in this study feel for going to college. If students see college as a path to better jobs and more economically secure futures for themselves and their families, educators can connect to that motivation by giving students the opportunity to explore how college can help them reach their occupational goals. If educators put down this motivation for learning, we are acting from a lack of understanding of the economic reality of many community college students.

Knowledge and Power

Some of the students made a connection between education and increased power, or control, over their lives. Javier, talking about how he would explain the importance of studying to his younger sister, made a connection to control over the economic variables in life.

I have to always tell [my sister], like, you know what? Look, you're going to struggle. I know that it is hard for you to talk because you don't like to do stuff like that. I know that you are lazy and you don't like school, but think about it. You always have to be thinking: What's going to come tomorrow? You want to live like this? You want to be paying rent? You want to be struggling with people? You're

going to be working hard, and working hard, and working hard. And you won't have the money to pay all your bills?

Rosa said that one of the most important things in her life was to have a major and a career. When I asked her to explain why education was so important to her, she talked about the difficulty of her parents' lives, her father's hopes for her, and about her own ambition. She viewed education as a way of escaping discrimination:

Because I want to be someone in this world. I don't want to be discriminated for not having a degree. I want to get a good job. I want to have a good life. And that's why. Because I see my father here. In Mexico he had a good job and here his education didn't count, and he's working [physically hard] right now. And he said to me, you have to study really hard. You have to finish a career here because I don't want you to do the same as I right now. That's why.

I was interested that Rosa's determination, and her father's support for her studies, was counter to a view of Mexican culture as patriarchal, with women not needing an education. I was curious about Rosa's views on more traditional roles for women. "What if someone said to you," I asked, "Rosa, you're such a pretty girl. Just marry a rich guy and have kids and be a mom? You don't have to worry about an education. What would be your response be if someone said that to you?" Rosa often spoke hesitantly in our first interview, searching for words to express her ideas in English. Her response to this question was quick and animated:

My response would be that I have possibilities, and the times have changed. And now the woman has arrived! (Laughs) And another person doesn't have to give me money. I don't want to stay all my days cleaning and cooking. I don't cook really well. (Laughs) And wash clothes. That's why I want to study. I want to do something that I really enjoy. Not just because the others say that you have to marry and then stay at home, no.

Like Rosa, Lydia connected education with freedom from stereotypical roles. Lydia did not want to be dependent on a man:

My older sister didn't finish middle school, and I feel like sad because she got married, and her life is so difficult. I said I want to go to college because what about if I have a husband and he treat me bad? Well, I'm not going to depend on

him anymore. So if I got a bad situation with my husband or something like that, I can depend on me.

Becoming Educated

While the economic opportunities that education promised the students and their families figured prominently in students' beginning of the semester interviews, other reasons for becoming "educated" surfaced in the interviews of some of the students.

Laurence, Tam, and Lydia talked about non-economic rewards of education.

Laurence said at the beginning of the semester that education was really important for him because it is "the key to success." Education, he said, "gives you power for the future." When I asked him to explain what he meant, he expanded on the connection he saw between power and education:

Power and knowledge [are connected] because when you get educated, you know what you're talking about so you have...you don't have confusion, or [have to ask] is this true or not. So you know everything that's going on. Probably not everything, but most of the things that are going on. When you're educated, you know probably the steps towards getting somewhere, or how to fight for something, or how to fight for your beliefs, too. Because you're well educated.

Lydia talked about her love of learning:

I like to take responsibilities and I really like to come to school. . . . I really like to study. I'm like an ambitious person and I like to learn a lot of things. I don't like to ignore things. And I feel happy when my friends or some persons ask me things about some subjects, and I have the opportunity to answer them, and they have the opportunity to learn things. Sometimes they tell me, oh, Lydia, you know a lot of things! I like to learn things to teach them.

When Tam started to talk about why education was important to him, he said that as the only child in his family, he felt an especially strong responsibility to make his parents proud.

When I asked if that was his main reason for coming to college, he replied:

The main reason that I go to college or attend school is that I want to know more about life because school is also teaching you life experience and some great lessons also, but it doesn't mean that school is teaching you everything. The society outside is . . . maybe realer than the school. Because if you fall down outside, nobody's going to help you up or bring you up, give you a hand. But maybe in school they do. The professors, or maybe even students, too. That's why

school is maybe the first place you will look, you will go through, and after that it's the real society, real life.

Tam saw higher education as a good transition to real life, a sheltered environment, a rehearsal for what called "real life."

Maybe [if] you go directly to real life, it will be tough because like I say, if you get problem, if you fail, it will make you shocked or something, and maybe this makes you give up. But in school, that's maybe just a practice, just an exercise. It makes you practicing on some little things, but after that will be bigger things. It makes you feel more comfortable whenever you practice it. You will be successful after passing through it.

Summary Comments

The student stories in this section teach one of the lessons I have learned in this project. Students' views of education as a path to better jobs should be taken seriously and understood in greater depth by community college educators. The desire for a good job is seldom a narrow interest in personal material gain. It reflects goals of basic economic security, increased control over one's own life, and fulfilled responsibility to others. An important strategy for retaining students is helping them make an education plan that students can recognize as a path to a better job. In addition, the student voices from this group suggest that some students also see other reasons for going to college that include love of learning and understanding the world and their place in it.

Fears and Doubts

In addition to the belief that college offered them opportunities, the students brought with them some fears and doubts about whether they would be able to reach their goals of a college education. Some evidence of students' lack of confidence came through in the beginning of the semester interviews. In addition, a short writing exercise that students in one of the classes did on the first day of the semester and the follow-up discussion on the second day of class revealed early semester worries. In the writing

assignment, students listed some of their “concerns” as they started college, and in the discussion, they talked more about those concerns and ideas they had for addressing them. Finally, some of the evidence for this section comes from the end-of-the-semester interviews. Some students were ready to talk to me about their fears and doubts only at the end of the semester when they were confident of successful completion of their first semester classes.

Leaving High School Identities Behind

A few of the students—Michael, Armando, and Laurence—talked about the person they had been in high school. They talked about how others viewed them and how they viewed themselves. I think part of the uncertainty they felt at the beginning of the semester was that they no longer saw themselves reflected in the eyes of others in the same way that they had in high school. All of them were looking for new ways of being themselves.

Michael’s retelling of incidents from his youth reflect several ways in which others viewed him, and ways in which he, at least sometimes, saw himself. He talked about being an accomplished athlete, a bully, a protective big brother, and a gang member. With his little brother in jail and no athletic teams in community college, none of these identities were positively related to being a college student. Michael did not report seeing ways in which academic accomplishment would gain him respect in his current environment. He said that people saw him as a “geek” and a “nerd” because he was going to college. In one part of the interview at the beginning of the semester, Michael tried out a way of relating the college world to his past world by comparing going to school as hustling:

School’s a hustle, work is a hustle, everything’s a hustle, you what I mean? And it really is. If you’re doing it for money, it’s a hustle. That’s the definition of hustling—working for money. . . . Your financial aid. That’s a hustle right there. You haven’t even put effort into going to school yet, but you already filled out your financial aid papers and they gave you money. We’re going to pay you to go to school.

And life after college could also be called a hustle:

When I'm done with all my little years, or whatever, and I get my diploma, my little piece of paper, and they tell me to go find a job, once I find that job, I'm hustling. I hustled in school to find that job. You know, so I figure, everybody hustles for something, but most people don't look at it that way because, they're like, oh, I'm working.

Armando talked about two identities from his high school years: the class clown and the flirt. He loved to make his friends laugh in high school, often at the expense of taking academic work seriously. But in college, he could not and did not really want to be the clown anymore. He felt socially isolated:

Yeah, there's nobody to go mess around with. You're just there by yourself, like in your own little world. Everybody's just there by themselves. So, I said I have no friends or knowing anybody. It's just like you're into the class and there's nobody you could talk to. If you even talk to somebody, you like feel all weird.

He also noticed that many of the students around him were older than he. "People are older here," Armando observed. "Like right now I feel young here. Because I mean there's so many people around me that are older than me and that are trying to do the same thing as me." When I interviewed him in the early weeks of the semester, he found that he was paying closer attention in class than he had in high school, trying out a new way of being:

I thought high school was all fun and games, and now in college I know you can't do that. It's not all fun and games. You really have to come and pay attention and do your work. . . . Now, I pay more attention in class than I did when I was in high school. And in high school I would be over here, sidetracked, and in college, like I'm into it. I'm really paying attention to it.

The one aspect of his high school identity Armando thought he could hold on to in college was that of "flirt." He thought it was fine to keep trying to charm the girls. However, as I observed Armando in the classroom, he seemed quiet and serious, nothing like the "class clown" or "flirt" he described to me. I worried about his sense of loneliness and isolation and wondered how he would re-negotiate his sense of self, and whether that re-negotiation would include being a college student who finished a degree or certificate.

One of the reasons that Armando seemed more vulnerable to me than many of the other students was the lack of support he reported having from his family. He reported that he had "always been the family screw-up." When he told me that part of the reason he wanted to go to college was to prove his family wrong, I asked how he thought his having earned a college degree might change people's perception of him. He answered that he did not think it would change others' views of him. He said that they would probably react much the same way that they had reacted to his high school graduation:

Now he's going to probably screw it up later on. I think that's all they're going to think of me. When I graduated high school, it was like, wow, he graduated. What's going to happen now? Then, if I graduate from college, it's going to be the same thing. Like, he graduated. At least he got a degree or something, but is he going to follow through?

While Armando did not think that getting a degree would win the respect of his family, he had not reached the point of not caring what others thought. At another point in the same interview he said that he hoped getting an education would get others to take him seriously:

Well, I would like everybody to notice me. Notice me. Like I believe getting an education like I said, it will get people to notice me. And my whole family just to really take me serious and not take me that I'm all a big joke. That I really want to do something.

The high school identity that Laurence talked about was one much more compatible with academic work than the ones Armando and Michael claimed. Laurence talked about being seen as a student leader by teachers and students. He was proud of having grown from a scared, nervous high school freshman to a senior active in clubs and student government. All the same, Laurence was conscious that he could not take that high school identity with him. When I asked him in the early weeks of the semester if he was forming new friendships with people at the college, he replied:

Um, well, no, I don't think so, not really. Probably because the confusion from everybody knowing me to coming to a college where nobody knows you. . . . Like

it's starting from scratch again, going from when everybody knew you, [when]everybody saw you as a leader to, like, coming as a [college] freshman. Nobody knows you, so you have to start building up relationships and leadership.

Concerns about Grades and Failing

Several students were nervous at the beginning of the semester about whether they would be able to finish the semester successfully. Of 15 students who completed a short writing assignment in which they listed their "concerns" about going to college, 6 students said they were concerned about their grades, 5 about not passing the class, 4 about not understanding or falling behind.

Rosa and Lydia were worried that their English was not good enough to do well in the class. Anh was worried that other students would not understand her pronunciation of English. Javier knew that he would struggle with expressing his ideas in English.

Not all of the students voiced their nervousness to me at the beginning of the semester. Some of them talked about it only at the end of the semester when they knew that they were going to complete the semester successfully. Omar wrote about feeling "overwhelmed" at the beginning of the semester. Carmen said she had been fearful that all the other students would progress, but that she would remain stuck in the same place where she started.

In a reflective piece written at the end of the semester, Melissa, one of the few students older than 30 in the study, remembered her nervousness and uncertainty at the beginning of the semester. As an older student, she compared herself to the younger students in the class. Melissa wrote:

I can remember feeling extremely nervous and unsure about the decision I made to come back to school after thirteen years. I was intimidated by the other students, most of them fresh out of high school. It felt like I have been out of school for an eternity. Also I knew my knowledge in reading and writing was weak, my vocabulary as well. I knew this was going to be a great challenge for me.

In the beginning of the semester in her first interview with me, Laura presented a positive, confident face. At the end of the semester, looking back on all that she had learned, she described herself as one of those students who do not read or speak English so well. She admitted to having a fear of reading out loud at the beginning of the semester. She recalled talking to her mom at the beginning of the semester about testing into the lowest level of remedial math:

I said to my mom, oh, I'm in such a low class. Will people make fun of me? And she said, believe me, you're not going to be the only student. And when I went into math class, I was like, oh my God, there's no more seats! Where am I going to sit? (laughs) And my mom's like, I told you. She's like, don't be afraid.

Laurence and Elena worried at the beginning of the semester that they would give up and quit before finishing the semester. Elena said in class discussion on the second day of class:

That's a pattern with me. You have to remember that we had bad experiences in school. If I didn't understand something in school, people would just say to me, oh well, then, you can't do that. Try something else. I never learned to stick with something until I understood it. I need a lot of encouragement so that I won't give up.

Worries About Time and Money

Michael, Roberto, Melissa, Cristina, Javier, Anh, and Alex all worried about the money that going to college would cost. Even with the help of the work study student, Roberto was not able to negotiate the financial aid process successfully on his own before the semester began. He was not awarded financial aid until well into the semester after being referred to another financial aid adviser by people working in the FastStart program. Time was also a concern, especially for students with jobs or families. Many students worried about whether they would be able to complete their homework while holding down jobs and taking care of families.

Summary and Comments

As I review evidence of students' reasons for coming to college and the doubts and worries that they bring with them, I notice a variety of stances toward the first semester. Some students, like Roberto, Lydia, and Rosa, voice a quietly fierce determination. Some want to prove to others that they can be college students. Some like Laurence, Armando, and Michael strike me as very vulnerable, dependent on how others see them. Some mask their uncertainty with non-chalance.

As students walk into their college classes on the first day, can the teachers who stand in front of them imagine the hopes and dreams, the fears and doubts behind the faces? I hope so.

CHAPTER 6

THE TEACHERS

In this chapter, I address the research question dealing with the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. In the first major section, I describe the teachers' backgrounds and experience, their reactions to participating in this research project, and their working relationships with me and with each other. The second major section outlines what the teachers said before the semester began about their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Introducing the Teachers

Sara and Linda, the two teachers in the study, had been part-time faculty members in the developmental reading program for several semesters before being asked and deciding to teach in the FastStart program. As program coordinator, I was looking for teachers who fostered interactive learning and believed in the importance of relating subject matter to students' lives. Sara and Linda were hired for the FastStart program because on the basis of interviews and references I judged their teaching philosophies to be compatible with FastStart program goals. Linda had taught for 2 semesters in FastStart prior to the study. For Sara, the study semester was the first semester teaching in the FastStart program. Both are part-time faculty members in the developmental reading program.

Sara

Sara, in her early 30s, came to teaching developmental reading in the community college after 2 years of middle school language arts teaching in a high-poverty, heavily-minority school, where she incorporated her experience in experiential and outdoor

education into her work with students and teachers. She earned a Master's degree in curriculum and instruction. In addition to adjunct teaching and raising her 2 pre-school-age children, Sara is an athlete, passionate about rock climbing, which she does competitively. Near the end of the semester in which the study was conducted, she injured her knee in a climbing fall, needed surgery, and managed not to miss a single class period, despite being in pain and needing to wear a cumbersome knee brace.

Small, slim, and strong, with chin-length brown hair, Sara dresses in a way that reflects her active lifestyle. She usually wears casual pants or skirts with soft-colored shirts and blouses. Her eyes show close attention to others. She projects a quiet, self-confidence in the classroom. She likes to try new teaching ideas and is willing to ask students to participate in ways that may be new to them. Due to a past experience with a male student who misinterpreted her friendliness, she is careful to keep some distance between her personal life and students.

Thoughts about Participating in This Study

Interested in teaching in FastStart and in being part of the research study because of her convictions about the importance of reflective practice, her intellectual curiosity about teaching and learning, and her interest in the process of conducting a research study, Sara consented to participate in the research study after conversations with me and after reviewing the informed consent form. She was, nonetheless, a little nervous about opening up her classroom and her teaching to my scrutiny, understandable considering my double role as researcher and her immediate supervisor for the FastStart portion of her teaching load. Although Sara felt responsible to teach well and creatively in all of her classes, because this class was part of a grant-funded program and this research study, she felt extra pressure. Sara mentioned her nervousness in a taped conversation before

the beginning of the semester, and again at the end of the semester as she looked back on the experience:

I felt like there was a lot more riding on this semester for me because I was part of this program. I was excited about it, but it was a good nervous. I hadn't been nervous in a long time. . . . Also, I felt like I had this expectation—I almost felt like the student in a way, where I felt like here you trusted me and picked me to do this, and I wanted to rise to the occasion and live up to that expectation. I wanted to have a good reputation and keep that going. So that, too, I felt like a lot was riding on this semester.

The informed consent form addressed the issue of risk for the two teachers in the study by stating that if either teacher did not wish to participate in the study at the outset of the semester, other sections would be assigned to her so that her teaching load would not be reduced, an important consideration for part-time faculty who are paid according to credit hours taught. The form also stated that the teachers could decide at any time not to participate in the research study. Even though the teachers had read and signed the form, Sara expressed her nervousness openly. My response to these expressions of nervousness at the beginning of the semester was to acknowledge that feelings of nervousness were natural and understandable under the circumstances and to offer reassurances. I knew enough about her and Linda's teaching to respect their work, so I thought there was little chance that I would react negatively to their teaching. I wanted to observe and discuss, and I expected a collaborative relationship to develop. In a taped conversation with Linda and Sara, I said,

My hope is that we'll develop a collaborative relationship and that you don't feel vulnerable, but I know that it's inevitable at the beginning because you don't know me and any time that you open up your classroom to someone else there is an element of risk that's not there otherwise, so I understand that. But as I said, my hope is that it becomes a real collaborative relationship among all three of us.

In fact, a collaborative relationship did develop between Sara and me, though she saw me more in the role of mentor than of peer, as she stated in an e-mail she sent me after the conclusion of the study period. During the first few class periods, I introduced

myself to the class, answered questions about the research project, and took field notes. Within 2 weeks of the beginning of the semester, Sara began to draw me into class discussions by asking whether I had anything to add and by suggesting I walk around the classroom, just as she did, while students were working in groups or individually on their writing to answer or ask questions or to offer suggestions. I also participated in two writer's workshop sessions, leading half of the class through the process of group comment on students' writing. Sara commented:

And having you in the classroom, that was new. It was exciting to have someone else in there and kind of evaluate as I'm going. I can look at you or also work together and team teach a little bit. Just more support for the students, but I was nervous about it at first.

At one point well into the semester, when students were discussing the novels they were reading in small groups, both Sara and I happened to be participating in the same small group. One of the students was struggling to express his idea, and both of us were drawn into trying to help him find the words to clarify what he meant. Then, however, another student asked a question about the novel. All student faces turned to Sara for a response, not to me. Following the class period, Sara said she found it interesting that they turned to her instead of me. The comment from Sara revealed, I think, some nervousness, perhaps that my presence might usurp her place with the students as a person to turn to for clarification. This incident showed a later stage of Sara's becoming comfortable with my presence in the classroom. She came to recognize the students' implicit trust in her to lead them, and my feedback on that topic helped her to come to that recognition. At the end of the semester, Sara commented:

What moved and touched me was that the students trusted me, and it helped that you saw that, that you had mentioned that. After you said that, I noticed it. I needed to take a step back. . . .To see that they trusted me in my decisions was really moving and to actually step back and look at that.

In addition to my presence during class one 3-hour class session per week, I met for a little over an hour once a week during most weeks of the semester with Sara and Linda to discuss how their classes were going. Some of the topics we discussed during these sessions included the importance of grades to students, ups and downs in their perceptions of how their classes were going, problems and progress with particular students, and attendance issues. These sessions deepened my understanding of the teachers' work and of the students. It also provided a forum in which we could all learn from each other. On 2 occasions, I met with the teachers separately because Sara requested a feedback session with constructive criticism of her teaching. During that session, I talked about my perceptions of how her class was organized and that students were actively engaged during class sessions. I offered a couple of ideas about working with non-native speakers, more because I thought that was what Sara wanted from me than from a conviction that I needed to offer advice. I think this meeting was another step in increasing Sara's comfort level with me and my presence in the classroom.

I came to value the informal meetings that happened without scheduling between me and each of the teachers. Sara often came to my office unannounced bubbling about how students had reacted to a lesson, worrying about a student, or reporting how she had seen an example of what we had talked about in one of our teachers' meetings in her interactions with students.

By the end of the semester, Sara was looking at participation in the research project quite positively. She saw the second set of ears and eyes in the classroom as a source of encouragement. She remembered a low-point in the semester when my presence was a boost for her:

I didn't feel good about what was going on in there. I don't know what it was, maybe it needed a change or maybe it was my energy level. I'm still not sure what happened in that period of time, but hearing that [you saw that the students trusted me] definitely

helped. And I think that's where the team teaching piece is nice too. You don't [usually, when no other teacher is present in the classroom,] have a gauge, and it does help if someone just says a little something like that to keep you going. I think that's important. And hearing the critical—constructive criticism also helps.

She saw participating in the research project as an indication of my trust in her and as support for her learning-by-doing philosophy and the hands-on interactive activities she has developed. According to Sara, these ideas were not accepted by some of her peers. During the study semester, she had a chance to use these techniques with a group of students who were accepting of them in a context in which those techniques were taken seriously as having pedagogical and developmental worth. She said:

I had the chance to teach a group of students who were all open to some of the non-traditional techniques. . . . I was, again, trusted to do that by you, because you had picked me to do this. . . . It seemed like the students just accepted what I believed and that's some of the learning by doing, bringing it all together, making them think about what we're doing and then applying it.

Linda

Linda, who is in her mid-50's, was born in the Philippines and came to community college teaching in the United States after many years of teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand, where she raised her two children. Before coming to her present position, she taught English as a second language at a community college in Hawaii for several years and earned a PhD in Education from the University of Hawaii.

Linda is medium-height, slender, and energetic. She dresses with attention to color, often in rich brown, orange, and red hues. She projects self-confidence, certainty, and a no-nonsense attitude. In the classroom, she often admonishes students to be critical thinkers, to stretch, to believe in themselves. She softens what at first seems to be a critical, stern demeanor with personal stories. She is open to confidences from students about their personal lives and is very sensitive to students' moods and attitudes. She has a strong spiritual faith, which she talks about openly with students.

Working Together

Initially, I saw the collaboration with Linda as less problematic than the collaboration with Sara. I knew Linda from previous semesters. We had already developed a friendly, collegial relationship. We were close to the same age and had about the same number of years of teaching experience. Linda was confident of my trust and respect due to our previous 2 semesters working together in the FastStart program, and she expressed no nervousness about having me in the classroom. Having completed a dissertation for a PhD recently, Linda was interested in supporting me in my dissertation work. All of this induced in me a lack of caution.

I soon came to see that I needed to be circumspect about my presence in Linda's classroom. For the second class period, Linda asked me to take charge of the entire class period in her absence. The experience helped me to feel more familiar with the students and to gather data about their emotions as they looked ahead to the semester and a longer course of study at the college. Unfortunately, during the next class period, partly because I felt comfortable with Linda and the students, I found myself jumping in to add to Linda's explanations. She talked to me about this before the next class period, asking me to jot my notes down when I thought of something to add, to wait to see if she covered what I was thinking, and then to add it later. She also expressed concern that students might become "confused about who the teacher is."

After this experience, I was much more careful. I only added to the class discussion when asked to by Linda. As in Sara's class, I often circulated during group work sessions, consulting with students about the assignments they were working on, but only if Linda invited me to do so. At one point in the semester as students prepared to conduct interviews for their career research papers, Linda asked me to prepare some remarks about my work in interviewing students, to tell why I thought interviews were important

ways of learning about a subject and to offer some tips on what the interviewer should keep in mind in interviewing. In these ways, my presence in the classroom fell within parameters similar to those in Sara's class.

However, in the end-of-the-semester interview with Linda, she talked about how she sometimes felt constrained by my presence in the classroom:

There was one time you were supposed to observe, then you came late and said there were things you had to take care of so you cannot come that day. Because you were not there, the discussion went somewhere else. Which I felt like, okay, Ruth is not here so I can talk more about this kind of thing. So your presence sort of became, I've got to be careful just to stick to academic stuff and not—you see, the thing is, I share a lot of stories.

So even at the end of the semester, Linda felt some pressure to stick to what she called the "academic" content and to modify her interactions with students when I was in the room. Nonetheless, throughout the semester, we talked extensively about students, their progress, and their problems, developing assignments, and students' self-assessments. Linda had a good grasp of the conceptual framework for my interest in student identity and was very helpful in thinking of ways to collect written evidence of students' perceptions of their learning.

As with Sara, the weekly meetings with the teachers, as a pair and individually, were important in learning about what happened in Linda's class when I was not present, about her perceptions of her students and their learning, and about the thinking behind her actions as a teacher. Linda and I also met in unscheduled sessions to talk about students and lessons. These scheduled and unscheduled meetings were times for encouraging each other and offering alternative ways of viewing what was happening in the classroom.

Collaboration between Linda and Sara

The relationship that developed between Sara and Linda was not as strongly collaborative as I had hoped for at the beginning of the semester, despite the expressed

intentions of everyone. Sara talked at the beginning of the semester about the isolation teachers, especially part-time faculty, often feel in a community college setting:

Where we're working right now, nobody works together. Teachers don't work together. We have these meetings once a month, nobody goes. And I'm guilty of it, because I can't get a sitter half the time, but I'm excited to work collaboratively with teachers again. That's the one thing I enjoyed the most working in middle school. . . . And I miss that, so I'm excited to have that back. Teaching's all about sharing your information. I like sharing lessons and sharing what we do. I feel like we don't do that enough here.

On the other hand, both Sara and Linda said that sometimes they like the autonomy that comes with teaching in a community college. Sara said, "Some days I like that. I can go in and not be bothered. Overall, I don't want that." Linda said that she really likes the freedom to experiment in the community college. At another institution where she taught she was told to teach and test in prescribed ways. She found the prescriptions stressful and decided not to teach at that school.

Linda, because of having taught the FastStart Reading/English course for two previous semesters, shared with Sara writing assignments she had developed to contextualize writing instruction around themes of reflection on self and exploration of career and education options. Sara used these in her class. While Sara shared some ideas and materials with Linda, I did not see that Linda incorporated those ideas into her teaching. I suggested that they visit each other's class, but they never scheduled time for mutual classroom visits. The weekly meetings including Linda, Sara, and me provided a context in which the two teachers exchanged ideas. The conversations in these meetings constituted most of the collaboration between the two teachers.

Two possible explanations for the limited nature of the teachers' collaboration present themselves. Because both of their classes were included in the same research study, both of them felt apprehensive about comparisons that might be drawn between their classes and their teaching. Both of them asked me about differences between their

classes. I responded by explaining that the purpose of the study was not to compare their classes or their students to determine which methods were more effective. Instead, the purpose was to look for changes in students' perceptions of themselves as learners and college students and to look for connections between those changes and the activities that they organized for their students. The explanation helped, I think, but in the absence of a finished report, some tension around the issue of comparing their classes and their teaching remained. A second explanation for their limited collaboration lies in their busy teaching schedules, which made it difficult for them to take time from their teaching, grading, and tutoring loads to schedule time to visit each other's classes.

The lesson for me as a program administrator is that collaboration among teachers does not happen easily given teachers' busy schedules, payment structures for part-time faculty, and even such mundane details as organization and availability of office space. To create a context that encourages collaboration among teachers requires careful thought, discussion with faculty, and modification of existing policies and procedures. Collaboration does not happen just because teachers and administrators think it is a good idea.

Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

In this section, I describe Linda's and Sara's beliefs about teaching and learning. The descriptions are based on a conversation the three of us had before the semester began, an end-of-the-semester interview with each of them individually, informal conversations, and observations of class sessions. This section draws mainly on the teachers' statements about their beliefs with some examples of classroom practice and excerpts from student interviews.

Community of Learners

One of the beliefs about learning that underlies the organization of the FastStart program is that classrooms ought to be organized in ways that encourage the building of

social bonds among students. In several ways, Linda and Sara show that they share this belief in the importance of the bonds that students form with each other. Excerpts from the interviews with Linda and Sara show a goal of fostering a community among their students, pride when that goal is accomplished, and disappointment about instances that fall short of the goal.

Linda described her goal for community in the classroom and told how she talked to students about the importance of cooperation among students:

Students see each other as a group—working together, helping each other, edifying each other, rather than tearing each other down. I have told the students that I'm not competitive, so I want them to focus on cooperation. To me, if you know the answer I would want you to share your answer instead of me trying to find the answer when you already know the answer. But, of course, you don't do that during the test; that's different. But when you're doing group work, it's not just being selfish, it's cooperation. So that's what I want to instill in them is the value of cooperation rather than competition.

Sara, in looking back at the semester, regarded bonds students formed as a mark of success of the experience with the students in her class. She said:

I was proud of the dynamic in the class, like I mentioned to you before. We just bonded in there. I told you about how when we did the main idea process, how to find it, and then they had to present it, and they all spoke, there was no nervousness. They all were so calm and comfortable. That, to me, is what I've always strived for, so it made me proud about this class.

Of the 14 students in her class, Linda regretted that, in her estimation, 3 students of the 14 did not form bonds with others in the class. She said that, although 2 of the 3 students participated in the class in many ways, she “felt sad that [the 3 students] chose to isolate themselves. They didn't want to be a part of the whole bigger group; they would rather be by themselves.”

During the conversation we had before the semester began about their beliefs about teaching and learning, both Linda and Sara talked about the classroom as a place

where all members of the group, teacher included, learn from each other. Linda noted that she makes a habit of telling her students about this belief:

I tell [the students] that you have background information that we don't know and that you can use that to share, and that it's not just I'm the teacher, that I know everything. I learn from students as well. So we are here to learn from each other.

Sara said that she organizes class sessions so that students have opportunities to learn from each other:

Sometimes I don't do a lot of the talking because, like you said, [the students] learn from each other. Well, we all learn from each other, so I'll introduce the lesson, we'll do a little bit with it, and then they go to work, and then they work together.

Interactivity and Activity

I define interactivity here as learners interacting with each other and the instructor. Student activity refers to students interacting with content of some sort. Student activity is often, but not always, engaged in interactively.

One of the reasons that Linda and Sara were able to create supportive communities of learners in their classrooms is that they both emphasized interactivity. They talked about interactivity as being important and organized their class sessions in ways that gave students multiple opportunities to learn from each other. Because they believe that it is important for students to work together, they provided opportunities for students to get to know each other from the first day of class. Group work was a daily part of class sessions.

In addition to planning activities that required students to interact, the teachers dealt with issues that interfered with students' ability to work together. For example, Sara used a variety of techniques for dividing students into groups so that, within a couple of weeks, all of the students had worked with every other student in the class, not just with the one or two students they usually sat near. When students did not focus well in their

novel discussion groups, she designed questions to help move them forward and moved the novel discussion time earlier in the class session when students were better able to concentrate. She included a reading about the differences between a group and a community and asked students to discuss whether they would describe the class as a group or community.

Linda paid close attention to which students worked together well and tried to nurture those relationships. She asked students on the first day of class to begin to figure out which students they worked well with. When she noticed on the first day of class that Rosa, a Spanish-speaking student who was not very confident of her English, seldom contributed in a group made up of very talkative students, she suggested she work with students who were better listeners. She encouraged Laura, a friendly, kind, outgoing student to make contact with Ruby, a very reserved student. She discouraged Laura, Laurence, and Michael, students who tended to get off task when they worked with each other from joining the same student work groups. She asked students to reflect in writing on how group work was going, what was working well, and what was not. When through these student reflections she learned that two of the Hispanic students were reluctant to work with the African and African-American students in the class because they "couldn't understand them," she told them to listen carefully and assured them that they would learn to understand each other.

Interactivity, that is, activity in relationship with others, is an important element of the teaching philosophies of both Linda and Sara. Sara and Linda also believe that the activity of each student, in other words, the ways in which the students engage with the concepts that are the subject of the course, is central to learning. Sara talked about these beliefs in relationship to the way she plans classes and the importance she places on

activities that get students out of their seats and working together. Linda talked about the learner as being engaged in “making meaning” and relating course concepts to their lives.

Sara's Beliefs about Activity

Sara called the hands-on, fun, thought-provoking activities she used to start class and to emphasize or introduce concepts “non-traditional techniques” in one of her conversations with me and “games” when she talked with students. These activities usually required students to get up and move around. Sara talked about why she thinks getting students out of their desks is important:

I think sitting sometimes drains you. If you're standing up and moving around and talking, you're energized and thinking. It doesn't all have to be written and it doesn't all have to be homework. It's just also through dialog that they learn. . . . They're constantly talking out loud and thinking out loud throughout the doing experience, so I think learning by doing really helps too.

She described how the activities fit into her lesson plans and how they help students to leave behind thoughts that may distract from learning:

I always start with a warm-up [activity], something to engage them, and they just immediately let their distractions, whatever was bothering them outside the classroom, go because they're engaged in something that is fun and quick, and it just gets them started.

The group of students in this class seemed to Sara to be especially willing to participate in these activities and to spend time reflecting and discussing what they learned from the activity. She commented:

Most of them, for the most part, would participate and would reflect and thought about [the game]. . . . They didn't take it as a light-hearted, silly game that some of my [other] students see it as, but they really took it as, wow, this is important. It did help them bond, and I think they saw that too.

The “games” are also consistent with Sara's view of fun, new perspectives, and creativity as elements of learning. She said in our discussion at the beginning of the semester, “I think it needs to be fun. I think if they're having a good time, then they internalize it more, and they remember it.” Noticing that her young son has fresh

perspectives on experiences and that he sometimes has difficulty in traditional school environments, she sees a connection between the kinds of learning environments that work for her son and the one she would like to create for her students, one that supports learners who “think outside of the box.” The activities and classroom environment she creates should, in her view, provide opportunities for “students who are in the bottom of the classes. They probably are outside-the-box thinkers since the traditional schools might not have worked for them.”

Linda's Beliefs about Making Meaning

Linda talked about learning as “making meaning.” She said in the pre-semester interview, “I believe that if the students don’t make meaning out of the lessons, they’re not going to learn it. They have to understand why they’re doing it.” Linda also used the word “contextualization” to talk about what the teacher does to help the students make meaning. She defined contextualization in one interview as making the concepts personal so that students understand why they are doing something in class. She said that one of the ways she prods students to make meaning is by not being satisfied with simple, surface answers to questions. Linda explained:

I like to ask them questions, like why, why, why, why. I remember one student the first year I taught here got so frustrated because she complained that I am never satisfied with their answers. You know, every time I ask a question, I try to make them think more and you know it's not just the surface, but [the student who complained] said I'm never satisfied because her answer is not what I have in my head.

Giving an example of a math student she worked with, Linda reported that she told the student who had not grasped the basic concept of an algebraic equation:

When you do things, ask yourself, why did I do this? If you have no answer, then what you're doing is wrong. You have to understand why you're doing what you're doing. And so I say that's why I like to ask the why question.

Linda believes that asking questions of the students helps them to adopt the habit of asking questions and thinking more deeply about ideas, about what they read, and about their own writing.

Linda reported that she contextualizes concepts by telling personal stories and eliciting personal stories from her students. She made what she called story-telling a regular part of most class sessions, usually starting each session with greeting the students, asking them how they were doing, allowing time for students to relate frustrations or successes, and then often telling about some experience from her life that helped set the tone and transition into the day's lessons. For example, one day she told about looking that morning at the geode she keeps on her desk. She noticed the plain, rough, gray exterior of the rock, but inside was a lovely, complex, purple-hued crystal formation. The geode reminded her, she said, of the importance of looking below the surface of events and people to find what is at the core. The stories she told in class sessions I observed had some point related to life lessons, study habits, or reading and writing lessons she was teaching.

In addition to questioning strategies and telling personal stories, Linda devised assignments that required students to apply reading and writing skills to questions and problems relevant to their lives. Reading and writing assignments often dealt with themes related to self-reflection, career exploration, and goal-setting. Linda reflected on the issue of students dealing with the problems of their lives, while trying to concentrate on college classes and learning:

It's important to me that they learn not only what I teach in class, the materials, the academic stuff, but I want them to learn life skills as well. Because you cannot separate your problems from—you know how they say don't bring your problems to school, but that's not realistic. So, yes, you can bring your problems to school, but if you know how to put it aside, then you can function. But if you mix them together and don't know how to handle that, then that's a problem. So in a way it's important for me to teach them how to handle that.

Several students in Linda's class were dealing with personal issues that threatened to interfere, or did in fact interfere, with attendance, concentration, and homework. Personal issues included recovering from years of incarceration and substance abuse in the case of Jimmy, histories of mental illness as in the case of Charlayne, and parenting challenges, especially for Melissa, Adrienne, and Elena. Linda believes that she should be cognizant of those issues and challenge students to deal with them as best they can and move beyond them. She often spent considerable time talking with students individually about the problems they faced in their lives. At the same time, she challenged them not to make excuses for themselves about not having homework finished or not coming to class.

Authority and Responsibility for Knowledge

Studies of intellectual development of late adolescents and adults (Belenkey, Clinchy, et al., 1997/1986; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Perry, 1999/1968) show that many people move away from a dualistic view of knowledge as right or wrong to one in which truth is more nuanced, context-specific, and dependent on perspective. They come to see themselves as capable of generating knowledge instead of dependent on authorities for truth. Linda and Sara, in their statements about their beliefs about teaching and learning and in their practice, showed that they expect students to move away from a view of the teacher as the sole, knowledgeable authority in the classroom and toward a view of themselves as responsible for their own learning.

Linda said that she expects students to discover their own answers to questions instead of relying on her for answers. One of the ways that she creates a context for students' discovery of knowledge is by countering students' questions with questions. In the discussion Linda, Sara, and I had before the beginning of the semester, Linda described the thinking behind this strategy:

If they are determined, they can do it, and if they cannot, if they think they need help, I'm available to help them, but I like to tell them that when you ask questions, you will get frustrated, because I will not give you the answer. . . . If you ask me what does this mean, my response is what do you think? And the students are frustrated because all they want is a quick answer, and I said that's not how you learn, you know, so I said, what do you think and then I'll tell you whether you're on the right path or not, but you have to give me the answer first, instead of just asking me what I think. . . . I think it's more of giving them the responsibility of the learning.

During observations of classes, I saw Linda putting this belief into action. During one class period when students were working on applying a reading strategy to the course textbook, Linda circulated through the classroom as students worked in pairs. While she gave some direction to students as she observed some problems they were having, she did not always answer students' questions. When Jimmy sought reassurance from Linda that he was on the right track, she responded with a question. When Laurence wanted to know if he was "right," Linda responded, "It's up to you. You're the reader. What do you want to find out?"

Sara concurred with Linda, noting that giving students answers all the time short-circuits their thinking while they wait for an answer from the teacher. She added:

I agree with you that you don't want to give your students the answers. You want students to have confidence in themselves as learners. So many students think in black and white. And actually this reading and writing is so subjective. It's not black and white. So I think it's so important to let them know that their answers are not wrong.

Sara then related this belief to organizing lessons that give students the opportunity to talk about what they are thinking as they work together in class:

And I feel like it's really important for them to get their thoughts out as we're going along. . . . [They gain] the confidence in learning. They don't think that their thoughts are wrong.

Linda concluded this portion of our discussion by describing these strategies as "empowering the students," and making them "responsible for their own learning." Sara

said she thinks these strategies help students to become "good problem solvers" and "independent learners."

Goal Setting

Another way in which Sara and Linda empowered students and gave them responsibility for their own learning was by incorporating goal setting into the class experience. I see this inclusion of goal-setting as another of the ways in which both teachers moved away from a view of the teacher as the authority and toward a view of learner as involved in the creation of knowledge.

Linda mentioned goal-setting in the discussion before the semester began, incorporated it into writing assignments she gave the class, and observed students' growth in the area of goal-setting as she looked back on the semester. She said that she talks with students at the beginning of the semester about their goals:

I talk about their goals. They have to have a purpose, and their goals have to be realistic. And they also have to have an action plan. If you don't have an action plan, it's just a dream. You know, you could say, oh, I want to get an A in this class, but what do you do to get that A. So you have to have an action plan.

Early in the semester, Linda demonstrated this principle in a very concrete way. She asked students to set short-term goals for themselves in learning a list of Latin and Greek word roots and affixes and then to make plans for how they would reach the short-term goal. She also incorporated the principles of goal-setting and action plans into two writing assignments. In one, students investigated a career they were interested in, and made plans for how they would find out more about it. Near the end of the semester, students wrote essays in response to an assignment that Linda called "Back to the Future" for which they had to describe their futures as if they were the present, in other words, to write about their goals as if they had already been achieved, and then to explain how they reached those goals by writing about their action plans as if they had already followed them.

Looking back on the semester, Linda cited increased student clarity about their goals as one of the aspects of the class experience that she felt proud of. She said:

It's important that students understand what is important to them and then go after [that] by setting realistic goals. I've seen them do that. They've become more realistic in their goals. They know what their goal is. . . . They have become more goal oriented and they became more aware of the importance of action plans. It's not just, "Oh, this is what I want," but "What is the plan to get there?" So that is what I saw in the [students'] writing, that it's not just wanting to be a successful student, but they have a plan. They're more realistic setting up goals.

Sara, too, talked about the importance of goal-setting in learning in the discussion among the three of us before the semester began:

I feel like goal-setting is really important because if we don't work towards something then we're kind of lost. I think with the students, too, that's important. I always have them set a goal, three goals for themselves, in reading and what they want to get out of reading and then we work towards that and it's something that they might not be completely comfortable with, but it's something that they're working towards that's important to them, and then [I] get them challenged to work towards that goal. I think goal-setting is important.

Instead of telling students what exactly they had to learn, students played a role in setting their own learning goals for the semester. (See the description of setting goals in the "Getting Started" section of this chapter for a detailed description.) Students as a class generated lists of what good readers and writers do, and then working from the lists, they set their own goals for learning. Mid-semester they reviewed those goals, assessed their own progress, and set new goals for the second half of the semester.

Critical Thinking

Another aspect of Linda's teaching philosophy that relates to student responsibility for learning is her emphasis on critical thinking. Linda explained that one of the reasons she is so passionate about the importance of critical thinking and students' ability to voice and support their opinions relates to her own experience as an Asian in a U.S. university. These were skills that were not part of her cultural background and that she needed to succeed in a Western academic setting. In her syllabus, she listed critical thinking as one

of the “college level” skills that students should learn while taking this course. She reported that she describes learning to think as one of the reasons for being college students:

When I ask the students, well, why are you here, they answer, well, I'm here to learn. Well, to learn what? I said, you have to think. You're here to learn how to learn so that when you're not here anymore, you'll still continue learning, because you will have learned how to learn. And you'll be proud of yourself. Do you know how powerful it is if you have something in there? (points to her head).

Linda linked critical thinking to students' learning to rely less on the authority of the teacher and to formulate their own ideas:

And most of the time, [people] are afraid, and not only afraid, but we're lazy, and I say [to students] I don't like students to say “I don't know” without first thinking. And most of the time, the answers don't have to be right all the time because people have different ideas, people come from different backgrounds, different experiences, so you have an answer, so sort of I let them realize that.

With her emphasis on critical thinking, Linda identified learning to distinguish fact from opinion as one of the components of critical thinking. She views critical thinking as essential to students' empowerment. When she probes students to explain why they have given a particular answer, Linda reported responding to students' answers in this way:

I have students who say, well, because it's in the book. Because it's written doesn't mean it's true, so I sort of teach them to think critically, otherwise people can control them. They need to be able to read and decide whether that's a fact or opinion and make their own decision, not just based on emotion, but informed decision.

Another component of critical thinking and reading that Linda talked about at the end of the semester and that I observed her teaching in the class is how the author's perspective and the perspective of the author's intended audience influence the meaning of the text. The lesson for the class was that critical readers identify the author's perspective, purpose, and intended audience. When a Muslim student in Linda's class questioned why a writer equated Muslims with terrorists, Linda brought the discussion around to the author's perspective and audience and pointed out that another author with

another audience would label other people as terrorists. Reflecting on the lesson in which students read and discussed an article about Iran and the Middle East, Linda said:

I feel like I'm opening a door where they can go and search for more truth. Again, I said, you don't have to believe what I tell you. That's why you have to learn what is truth and author's opinion, point of view. So you have to listen to different opinions and make your own judgment, make your own opinion whether you believe that or this.

At the end of the semester, when Linda reviewed students' written feedback about what they learned in the course, she said that she was proud of how students reported learning to think critically.

Basically what they're saying is that they've become a critical reader, critical thinker and a critical writer, which was the goal of the program. I felt like we met the goal. They felt they did reach the goal.

Examples of students' reports of becoming critical thinkers are included in Chapter 8.

Challenge, Comfort, Panic

Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda (1999, 2001) suggest metaphors for describing learning environments that encourage learners to shift perspectives on themselves and learning. The metaphors include holding environment, border crossing, bridges, and providing good company on a journey. The teaching and learning philosophies of Sara and Linda include the idea of creating transitional spaces for students. Both of them talked about the importance of challenging students. Linda talked about starting where students are, but expecting them to push further. Sara articulated a conceptual framework for herself and students to explain this transitional space and the context which she believes maximizes student learning.

In the conversation with Sara before the semester began, she indicated that the college environment holds expectations of students that probably differ from the expectations of students in high school classes and a recognition that helping students be

the kind of student that college learning environments may require is not an easy task. She explained:

Because I think . . . that in a traditional classroom, yes, everything's provided for them, and we hold their hands. And when I think about that now, as far as college, they are all of a sudden expected to be that kind of [self-directed] student, [but in the past] they've always been held all the time. It's hard to get them there.

Linda talked about working with students where they are but at the same time nudging them to shift to new perceptions of learning and themselves. She described her approach as having five parts: finding out what the students' current understandings were, giving some guidelines, allowing for practice and application, offering encouragement, and then pushing students further. Linda said in the discussion before the semester began:

I usually start with where the students are. For example, if the topic is main idea, I just have to ask, OK, what do you know about main idea? Because then I would know whether they're on the right track or if I even have to explain it if they already know it. . . . And then of course, you have to give them guidelines so that they will feel some direction and encouragement. OK you've done this; you've done very well. OK, push them a little further.

Both Linda and Sara identified challenge as an important element in their teaching. As Linda looked back on her students' learning at the end of the semester, she cited the seeking of challenge as one of the marks of successful student learning, observing that "[the students] challenge themselves more. Like Rosa said, 'This is a class of not giving up.'"

Sara saw challenge as a necessary element of a classroom environment that promotes learning. She said in our pre-semester discussion, "I think they need to be challenged in order to learn. If they're not challenged, then they're not learning anything because they're too comfortable. It's too easy." Sara talked with students at the beginning of the semester about the importance of challenge, which she sometimes called risk, as a condition required for maximum learning. She told students that in situations in which they are trying or expected to learn, they may find themselves feeling comfortable, feeling as if

they are taking a risk or challenging themselves, or feeling panicked. (See Chapter 7 and Appendix C for a detailed description.) Sara talked before the semester began about how she talks to students on the first day of class:

I always tell them we can't learn in the comfort zone because we're too comfortable. We can't learn in the panic zone because we're too revved up. If they are panicked, we need to take them to the comfort zone, and then we can take them to the risk zone from there. And I always use math as the example because when you're panicked, you're shut off. You can't learn.

In addition to the math example, which she gives to students to explain the difficulty of learning when they are panicked, Sara gave the example of how paired and small group work creates a comfort zone which allows students to take the risk of doing oral presentations to the class:

A lot of times you have students who don't like to talk in class. And I always like to have them do a presentation as their final, usually on the novel and how it relates to our lives. . . . You know, you say presentation and some students just tense up. And I tell them, if you are panicked about that, we're going to get you to the comfort zone before you get to the risk zone and so we do a lot of having them talk, reflect with each other with a partner, or in groups of three or four.

In this way, Sara conceptualizes the tensions between the comfort of learned perspectives, the discomfort of being challenged to look at things from new perspectives, and the feeling of being unmoored or "panicked." When I asked Sara about the tension between creating a safe comfort zone, but at the same time asking students to take risks and move into an area of discomfort, she replied in a way that reiterates her emphasis on building a community of learners:

I don't see risk as a discomfort, and I try to show them that. So learning and doing something new doesn't have to be so uncomfortable that you don't want to do it. And I also try to build up to that. Do a lot of small group stuff. Not a whole lot of large group stuff where they're forced to talk in front of everybody, so get them comfortable with everyone that's in the class first so that they're not uncomfortable taking a risk. It doesn't all just start on day one.

Reflection, Self-Assessment, Feedback

Reflection, self-assessment, and feedback figure in the teaching and learning philosophies of Linda and Sara. They talk about their importance and build opportunities for student reflection, student assessment of their personal progress, and feedback from students into their classroom practice. These three elements are seen as integral to student learning and also play a role in the teachers' learning.

Sara commented on the importance of reflection before the semester began: [About] the way we learn, I think we need to reflect on what we learn and think about it and talk about it, write about it. Just the more ways we internalize it, the more we use it and the more it becomes part of us and a habit.

Student reflection activities, individually, in pairs, and as a whole group, were a regular part of Sara's lesson plans, usually at the beginning after warm-up activities, or "games," and again at the ends of class periods, units, and the course.

Linda built self-assessment into most class periods as well. For example, she asked students to describe what they had learned, to write about their feelings as they worked on assignments, to make suggestions about the instruction they needed to become better readers or writers, and to think about how they could increase their own learning.

One way Linda used student feedback was to adjust lesson plans according to students' ideas about what they needed to work on. One of the students, Laura, expressed surprise that a teacher took student feedback seriously:

I really liked how at the end of each lesson, or at the end of each class, she always had us write a response about what we think about the program. She said, just be honest with me, is it good for you, is it bad. She always wanted our feedback, and I liked that as well.

When I asked Laura if she thought Linda listened to the feedback, she responded:

Yes. Because after awhile I said I don't know why we stopped doing what we used to do, I really liked it, and she pulled me aside, and she's like, well, we stopped doing this because most kids wanted to focus on grammar, and I was like, oh, OK. So she really actually read my paper. And she stopped and she talked to me about it. So I was like OK. That's good.

Both Linda and Sara used student feedback, reflection, and assessment as a way to help students to become conscious of their own learning and their personal responsibility for that learning. For example, Sara asked students at mid-semester to assess the progress they had made toward the reading and writing goals they had set for themselves and, based on that assessment, to set goals for the rest of the semester. Early on in the semester when there was still time for students to switch to traditionally-paced courses, Linda sought student feedback about the question of whether the accelerated pace of the class was a good fit for each of them and whether they were committed to continue in the class. Sara, who used rubrics for assessment of the students' essays, asked students to assess their own writing on each of the elements on the rubric before turning in their essays. One of the students, Javier, commented that he felt really proud when the way he rated his own writing on the rubric began to correspond with the way that Sara rated it. Javier was gaining confidence in his ability to judge the quality of his writing and taking responsibility to assess it before handing it in to the teacher.

At the end of the semester both teachers built opportunities for self and course assessment into the end-of-the-semester activities. Students in both classes filled out an assessment survey ranking the importance of class activities to their learning. Linda assigned students the task of writing her a letter describing what the class meant to them. Sara organized an activity for the last day of class in which students, the program adviser, the career adviser, Sara, and I received and gave feedback to each other.

Finally, student feedback was one aspect of Linda's and Sara's reflective practice. In the end of the semester interviews, both teachers pointed to student feedback as a source of the pride they took in their work for the semester. As mentioned before, Sara pointed to the bonds formed by students in the class. Linda reviewed student feedback in

the letters they wrote to her and saw evidence that students had made progress toward a central goal of her teaching, that of becoming critical thinkers. Linda summarized, "Basically what they're saying is that they've become a critical reader, critical thinker and a critical writer, which was the goal of the program. I felt like we met the goal. They felt they did reach the goal."

Student feedback also played a role in helping Linda and Sara to tailor their instruction, support, and classroom activities to meet the needs of the individual students in their class. Attention to each student was a key aspect of their teaching.

Attention to Each Student

Sara and Linda alluded to the belief that teaching should be tailored to meet individual student's needs in our conversation about their philosophies of teaching and learning, but the extent to which this was an important component of their teaching became more salient through observations of the classes and conversations with the teachers throughout the semester. The belief in the importance of individual student needs can be seen by examining what Sara and Linda believe and do related to adherence to prescriptions for course curriculum, balance of consistent expectations with flexibility, adjustment of teaching strategies, and attention to building relationships with students.

Prescribed Curriculum

Both Linda and Sara talked before the semester began about adjusting curriculum to fit the students. Both were eloquent on the subject. Linda said she viewed the curriculum as a guideline, not a strait-jacket. She connected this viewpoint to the teacher's need to be flexible:

Flexibility is important. To me, the curriculum is a guideline. It doesn't mean that what I put in the curriculum I have to rush, rush, rush so that I can complete these things. To me, no, that's a guideline. If I need to take another path because I find that students are having problems with something, then I will have to take more time just to explain it.

Sara talked about the importance of being flexible with her own syllabus and lesson plans and adjusting to the students in a particular class based on the feedback she gets from them:

I feel like I need to be flexible as a teacher with my students. . . . I have this syllabus, I have my plan, but if it's a class that doesn't follow that plan, and we need to go in another direction, then I want them [to go in another direction]. The importance is that they're learning, that they're getting something out of this, and that they can use it in their life, so if we're going in a direction that just doesn't work for them, then we go in another way. So as a teacher I need to be flexible and be able to read my students so that I give them what they need, not what I need.

Sara gave an example from a class she taught in the summer term:

So I had to do that with this Thursday class I'm teaching. It's such a wonderful curriculum and I love it. . . . I thought they were students just coming into college and they wanted to be community health workers. Well, when I walked into that classroom, that is not what they were. They're all parents. They've been working for years. And they're just trying to get this certificate. They know the stuff I'm going to teach so I had to put a completely different twist on it and change my entire curriculum because they did not need what I was about to give them. And it actually worked out really well.

Adjustment of Teaching Strategies

Linda talked about the importance of paying attention to how a student is making meaning and adjusting explanations and activities to fit the way in which the student understands, or does not understand, a concept. She gave an example of a student in a remedial math class she was teaching. Linda described the student and her problem with understanding equations:

For some reason, this lady—she's in her 50's—couldn't understand algebraic expressions, and then I realized that she doesn't even understand the equation. So what I did was explain to her that this equal sign, it's like a balance, whatever you put on this side has to be the same so that the balance will stay the same.

Linda went on to explain how verbal examples did not help. Only when she used paperclips on a table placed by the student on each side of an equal sign and asked the student to place and remove paper clips to correspond with the written numbers in the

equation on the paper did the student grasp the concept that when she performed an operation on one side of the equation, she had to perform the same operation on the other side. She summarized the significance of this example from her teaching:

So it tells me that different students—you have to find out how a student will learn. You cannot repeat the same thing when you know it's not working, and then the students will be frustrated. They think that they are stupid, you know, so try to find out which kind of technique will work for which kind of student.

Tension Between Stated Expectations and Flexibility

Both Linda and Sara experienced some self-doubts related to when they should insist on adherence to stated expectations regarding attendance, tardies, and due dates and when they should be flexible with individual students. Perhaps teachers who are sensitive to individual needs will inevitably struggle with these kinds of decisions. On the one hand, the teachers want to move students toward taking responsibility for their learning and to learn the habits and behaviors of successful college students. On the other hand, they want to make success possible, given the real stresses of students' lives.

Some students were conscious of this tension, recognizing that flexibility may have some advantages or reflect a teacher's kindness. Some students were strongly in favor of a strict approach, even as they conceded some understanding for a teacher's flexibility. For example, Laura, a student in Linda's class, with strongly positive reactions to the course and Linda's teaching style, had one criticism of Linda's teaching, and that criticism was related to this issue. In an interview near the end of the course, Laura expressed surprise about Linda's flexibility regarding due dates and the perception that the flexibility reflected Linda's understanding of the students' lives:

I remember when I first came to school, everyone's like the teacher's gonna be on top of you and say you have to turn this in. You have to turn that in on time or, if not, you're gonna get an F. And Linda said that in the beginning, and anything late is half off or something. What was really surprising is more than half the class would turn a lot of things in late and she would still accept it and give it full credit.

Like she kept giving us time, and she kept asking us to do it, and she was really patient with us, and she helped us, and she wasn't just like, OK, you get an F. Like she would understand why we didn't turn it in and things like that. That was surprising because most people—well, my brother's teachers always say like it doesn't matter what you have going on, you have to get it done. So that was what was surprising about this semester with Linda. I don't know if all the other teachers are going to be like that, but that's what was really surprising.

However, when I asked Laura whether Linda's flexibility was good for students, Laura said that she thought that being flexible failed to teach students responsibility. In Laura's words,

On most cases, I think it wasn't a very good idea because, yeah, she's a good teacher and she's trying to teach us, but at the same time we need to learn responsibility, and the only way we're gonna learn responsibility is if we take responsibility for our actions. So she said that you have to get this done on this day, and if we don't, if she doesn't keep going, we're going to think it's OK. And what happens in the next class if we try to do that and they don't accept it and then we don't learn? So she really needs to get on it and tell us well, yeah, she might feel sorry for us, but it's our responsibility. We're not in 7th grade anymore, and things like that.

Javier in Sara's class also saw a connection between the teacher's flexibility on due dates and a failure to demand responsibility from students. In his opinion, based on his experience as a successful student in a Mexican university-preparatory high school, strict due dates created the pressure students needed to work hard and be responsible. Javier said that strict due dates were good for students:

because you work under pressure, but the pressure that makes you responsible for the things that you have to do. . . . When I was in Mexico, that was one of the things that helped us students to make us more responsible, like the pressure, working under pressure. That's one thing, that always pushing. Like it push[es] us to do the work. And also you have to do it good because if you fail what you have to turn in, it is affecting your grade. . . . I came up with that idea because I like it, and I like working like that—not in a hurry, but just doing a good work in a short period of time. And I like that.

Javier went on to say that he was sometimes a little angry when he had worked to finish an assignment on time, and then Sara relaxed the deadline. He thought that students sometimes took advantage of the flexibility and did not complete work on time because they knew they could get away with it. He noted a difference in his experience of school in

the U.S. and school in Mexico. In the U.S, attendance and participation often figured into the grade a student received, while in Mexico students' grades were based on exams and tests only. While holding to the idea that the stricter, less flexible system he experienced in Mexico was better for him, he acknowledged that he observed that some students in Sara's class behaved more responsibly than he expected:

Like I saw some people that look not that responsible, but they still turn in the work. And they look like party guys, but they're doing all the homework and stuff like that, you know? Things that you don't see over there [in Mexican schools]. You see a party guy [in Mexico]; he's a party guy forever.

In contrast, Eddie in Sara's class, and Charlayne in Linda's class were appreciative of some flexibility with due dates. Charlayne, who struggled with mental health issues, referring to a teacher she had in a previous semester, was appreciative of the times when he gave her the chance to hand in homework late. When I asked Charlayne how she thought teachers should resolve the dilemma of strict deadlines and flexibility, she said that "sometimes you have to follow the rules," that most of the time she did turn assignments in on time, but that she appreciated the occasions when teachers allowed her to hand in assignments late.

For Eddie, too, some flexibility in respect to due dates was helpful. He introduced the topic while he was talking about what he liked about Sara's teaching. He said, "And she would never let you down. Even if you don't turn in this work, you still have time to work tomorrow. She wants to know that you're working on it." When I asked Eddie if Sara's flexibility on due dates was important to him, he replied:

Yeah. Like sometimes, when I used to be at work, you know it was just get home from school, and I don't have a computer at my house, so I would have to go other places, and they wouldn't give me like that much time to do my work, and then I would have to go to work, and I wouldn't be finished by that day. So by her flexing a little, it was very good. It worked for me. So I can kind of relax, knowing that I have to turn in by that day, but if I don't turn it in by that day, she's not gonna get mad. She gets it.

I told Eddie that teachers often struggle with finding a balance between being strict and being flexible, and that some students think that teachers should be strict in order to teach students to be responsible. Eddie conceded that some students might take advantage of a teacher's flexibility. However, Eddie suggested that students shift how they view the teacher's actions and pointed out that flexibility is not unlimited:

I would say, some of the students . . . take advantage of it. You know that person is flexible, and then they take advantage of it. But if you get it in your head, that she's giving you an opportunity, because she wants you to succeed, she doesn't want you to fail. . . . If she's flexible, then we know that she's not the mean person. She gives you another opportunity, not that much of a time, but she still does. And if you turn it in like that late, she's going to tell you right away, you know straight off, this is late late. I'm going to take it as late. . . . I know [the flexibility] helped. For me, having a little flexibility is all right, but not that much. Then guys are going to be irresponsible. They're going to take advantage. They're going to say I can turn it in whenever I want to. That's not the point. The point is that she's giving you an opportunity to turn in the work a little bit late, but not that late. That's what I think. That's my response to that.

Linda's work with Michael was an example of her attempts to strike a balance between sticking to stated expectations and providing flexibility for a troubled student. In his interview with me at the beginning of the semester in which he recounted his experiences in high school, Michael gave several examples from his youth in which adults did not set boundaries for him. He seemed to rebel against authority and at the same time to regret that adults in schools did not enforce boundaries for his behavior in school. During the college semester, Michael had long stories for why he was not on time to class, why he had to leave early, and why he did not have an assignment finished. He seemed to have a chaotic and financially-precarious living situation. Some time after the middle of the semester, he had a very serious encounter with law enforcement with possible long-term consequences. At times, Linda responded to Michael's stories with the refrain she used sometimes with students: "No excuses! I know life is difficult, but you're a college student now. If you want to do this, you can't be making excuses." On another occasion, when

Michael was withdrawn and appeared to be very dejected, instead of insisting that he participate, Linda asked him to sit at the back of the classroom and to write about what was bothering him. Michael sat and wrote continuously for the remaining 30 minutes of the class period and talked with Linda after class ended. Sometimes Linda ignored Michael's challenges and comments; other times she pushed him to explain his ideas more fully. She quietly praised his creativity and made sure that other students were aware of his artistic talents. I think that either the extreme of being totally strict or being totally sympathetic would have been ineffective with Michael. At the end of the semester, in Michael's class assessment letter to Linda, he wrote that the class had given him hope that he could do the academic work required in college. Based on my conversations with him and observations of his behavior in class, I believe that, while hope is not certainty, given the stresses in his life outside school, Michael's persistence to the end of the semester and his enrollment in the subsequent semester were a testimony to the benefits of Linda's flexibility of mind and heart.

The task for Linda and Sara of negotiating the tension between setting standards and expectations for students and providing the flexibility that allowed more students to succeed was perhaps the source of the greatest stress for them. In informal conversations with me and again at the end of the semester, Sara talked about her tendency to take students' absences and tardies personally, as a reflection on her teaching and her efforts to create a positive learning environment. Many teachers react to student absences and tardies with punitive attendance policies. Sara resisted that reaction and tried to see that the reasons students were late or absent may have been for reasons outside her control. Four students in Sara's class had poor attendance records. Under Sara's flexible policies, two of the four finished the semester with passing grades in both levels of Reading and English. Of the two who did not finish both levels, Angela left in her effort to deal with

domestic violence without finishing any coursework; the other left without explanation after successfully completing the first level of reading and English at mid-semester. Two students completed despite poor attendance. Adrienne, the mother of a 2-year-old child, gave her child's bouts with colds and ear infections as the reasons for her absences. Sara felt especially good about one student's completion of the paired courses she taught. In a conversation with his mother, Sara learned that the student had been very unsure of his decision to attend college and had made the decision counter to the influence of an important peer. His mother reported that her son had spoken highly of the course and Sara's teaching and that she had noted a gain in self-confidence. During the course of the semester, I was able to observe that the student interacted with his peers with increasing ease, though his poor attendance appeared to make his participation in class activities more difficult than for other students. While the fact that these 2 students completed the semester is positive, the academic records of both students in the subsequent semester were not good. Adrienne enrolled in four classes, failed three of them and withdrew from one. Academic records for the other student showed that he withdrew from all of his classes in the next semester.

Building Relationships with Students

One of the features of Linda's and Sara's teaching that was salient to me was the effort they took to build a relationship with each student in the class. I think that these relationships were critical in their work to make the course responsive to individual students. They talked about strategies they used to make one-on-one contact with students. The strategies they used were not identical, but congruent with their personal styles. Linda was more likely to than Sara to elicit confidences from students. Some students confided personal information to Sara, but she was less likely than Linda to ask

students directly what was bothering them. Examples of how Linda and Sara built relationships with student follow.

Just 2 ½ weeks into the semester, I met with Sara and Linda separately to get a sense of how they viewed their work with their classes after the first few class sessions. I asked them what they felt good about related to what had happened so far in class and what they were concerned about. In response to the question about concerns, Sara responded that there were students, and she named them, students who until that point had been quieter and more reserved than most of the other students. She wanted to be sure to have some additional one-on-one contact with each of these students because she did not think that she had spent enough time with them to make a personal connection. She named specific times in which she thought she would be able to make the contact. Explaining why she thought that the personal contact was important, Sara said, "I want students to feel like individuals, not like one more face in a big, anonymous institution." At the end of the semester, Sara touched again on the issue of building relationships with individual students:

What's important to me is that I can speak to them one-on-one and they can get to know me and I can get to know them. I think that helps with the trust. I feel like I did do this in this class.

Linda talked about her concern for individual students in the pre-semester discussion. In response to a question about her goals for the semester, Linda said that she wanted to "see changes in students," to make "a difference in their lives," to see "them succeed in their goals" and to learn not to give up so easily. She followed that response by saying that one of the ways that she worked toward these goals was to be observant of students moods, or in her words, "what is happening to the students at that time." She went on to give examples of how a student's body language, the choice to sit in the back of the room, facial expressions, or reluctance to participate in class were clues to be closely

observed. A strategy she used frequently was to ask students who appeared to her to be distracted or troubled to step outside the classroom while other students were engaged in group work and to invite them to tell her what was troubling them. Linda explained her reason for talking to students about their personal problems:

Some people may think I'm nosy, because I want to know what's happening in their personal lives. I feel like . . . if I'm able to help them with their personal problems, if I'm able to do that, then I'm able to help them concentrate on their lessons.

Four students commented on Linda's openness to the issues they were dealing with in their personal lives and talked about how her concern helped them. Laura is one example:

I remember one day I was having such a bad day. . . . [Linda] could tell because I wasn't talking to [other students], and that was a surprising thing. I was sitting over here by myself. I was just at my table myself, I didn't want to talk. I didn't want to look at anybody. I was just by myself. I didn't care. And [Linda] kept asking me if I was OK and I just kept saying, yeah, I'm fine, I'll be OK. After she gave the directions, she was like, Laura, I need to speak to you outside, and I just remember crying and talking to her and she was just hugging me and held me And that just touched me, truly, because no teacher's ever took the time out of their day to talk to me the way she did. . . . She's honestly a very good and important person in my life and I don't think I'll ever forget about her. She is such a good person. I think if I came in to this program, if I wasn't in Linda's class, I don't think I would really achieve as much as I have just because she really does care.

Linda talked to students at the beginning of the semester about the importance of open communication between students and teacher. She included the point on her course syllabus. In our pre-semester discussion, she talked about the importance she sees in student-teacher communication:

And of course, I let them know that there needs to be open communication so that we can develop a relationship. If they are not comfortable in the class and they do not have a good relationship with the teacher, then they cannot learn. So if there is anything that I say that has offended them, they need to let me know, and then I can explain or I can apologize.

She went on to give examples of students in previous semesters with whom she had had conflicts that she attributed to a lack of clear communication and showed how

communication cleared up the misunderstandings between her and the students. She said that she asks students to come to her directly to deal with problems between teacher and student:

So I try to tell my students we will have conflicts, we will have misunderstandings in class, and we need to be open so that then we can [resolve them]. I said if you don't like me, and you go around complaining to other people, they can't do anything. The problem is not resolved, so I want you to come to me. Just like if I have a problem with you, I will come to you, not to your mother or boyfriend. So I sort of say that we have to have a good relationship, a good classroom atmosphere, for you to learn.

Another indication of the importance Linda placed on connecting with individual students was the sadness she felt about one student who stopped coming to her class. At the end of the semester, Linda noted this student's failure to complete the semester:

I felt that I lost Jose. I felt I was not able to connect with him. Probably I used the wrong approach, and when I changed my approach, it's probably too late. Since he didn't respond to [the program adviser's] phone calls, I don't know why he left. So it's like, "What did I do wrong? What could I have done different? How could I have helped him? Why did he choose not to come back?" He's smart, he has the ability. So I must have done something.

Summary

In summary, Sara's and Linda's stated beliefs about teaching and learning are summarized in the Table 5.1 below. The next chapter describes the classroom environments these teachers created with their students in the 2 classrooms that were part of this study.

Table 5.1

Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning

Belief about teaching and learning	Teacher(s) espousing belief
1. Creating a community of learners is important for student learning.	Sara, Linda
1.1. Students should interact with each other in and outside the classroom.	Sara, Linda
2. Learning is organized around activity.	Sara
2.1. Students must engage in "making meaning."	Linda
3. The teacher is not the sole knowledgeable authority in the classroom	Linda, Sara
3.1. Students should discover their own answers to questions.	Linda, Sara
3.2. Students should formulate their own questions about reading.	Linda
3.3. Students should talk with each other about the subject matter in the classroom.	Sara, Linda
3.4. Students should be engaged in setting their own goals for learning.	Sara, Linda
3.5. Students should become critical thinkers	Linda
4. Students need to be willing to take on challenges to learn.	Sara, Linda
4.1. Teachers should foster learning environments that provide a combination of comfort and challenge. People do not learn well when they are panicked.	Sara
4.2. The teacher starts with "where the students are" in explaining new concepts.	Linda
5. Teachers should structure opportunities for students to reflect on and assess their learning.	Linda, Sara
6. Teachers learn from students' feedback.	Linda, Sara
7. Teaching and curriculum should be tailored to meet individual students' needs.	Linda, Sara
8. Teaching involves negotiating a tension between stated expectations and flexibility.	Observed in both teachers, not stated
9. The relationship between teacher and student is important in learning.	Linda, Sara

CHAPTER 7

THE CLASS

In the previous chapter, I recounted the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning with some documentation of how they implemented their beliefs in the classroom. In this chapter, I describe class sessions, activities, and assignments in order to provide additional evidence of the link between the teachers' beliefs and the classroom environment they and their students create together. In "Getting Started," I describe the implicit and explicit messages communicated to the students about teaching and learning during the first week of class. "Activities and Assignments" includes descriptions of classroom routines, writing and reading assignments, as well as outside-of-class activities. In "Difficult Days," some of the problems encountered in each class are recounted.

Getting Started

The first week of class sessions was important for communicating to students some of the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and helping students to see what would be expected of them. More detailed descriptions of the first day of class in each of the sections are included in Appendix C and D. In this section, I describe messages the teachers communicated, both explicitly and implicitly, to the students at the beginning of the semester and show how the messages were incorporated into class sessions.

Challenge, Safety, and Responsibility

In Sara's class, her explanation of the learning target zone framed for students important aspects of the learning environment she planned to create with them. (See Appendix C for a detailed description of the learning target zone activity.) After leading students through a series of exercises in which students thought and wrote individually,

talked together in pairs, and moved about the room, Sara summarized her main points. Learning requires that learners take on a challenge, or risk. Learners can be neither too comfortable nor panicked if they are to learn optimally. Students need to get comfortable in the class and with other students, but they need to take on challenges and risks as well. The teacher is responsible for helping students become comfortable in the classroom and providing a challenging course. Students are responsible for keeping the teacher informed if they become either too comfortable or panicked.

On the first day in her class, Linda used personal stories and a metaphor to encourage and challenge students. She told about her own struggles to finish her Master's and doctoral degrees and what helped her to finish. She told about her daughter's difficulty in choosing a path and sticking to it. Linda's advice to students was to work hard and not give up. "Pick a mountain," she said, "and stay on that mountain until you reach the top." The lesson described below in "Integrating Students' Lives into Class Activities" was the major way in which Linda communicated to students in early class sessions that the classroom was a safe place to voice their hopes and concerns. Students were responsible, Linda told them, for letting her know when the class or the relationship with the teacher was not going well for them.

Because students in both classes were in an accelerated program, working to complete 2 levels of developmental English and reading in one semester instead of 2, each of them had met with the program adviser and discussed the time and effort commitment they were making. As a result of attending the required advising session, students probably had an expectation of challenging work. Some were nervous about the challenge inherent in an accelerated format.

Learning with Other Students

In both classes during the first week, the students were engaged in activities that gave them the opportunity to begin getting acquainted with each other. Both teachers led activities on the first day in which students introduced themselves to each other and then to the class. In both classes, from the first day, students worked in pairs and small groups. The expectation that they would work together and learn from each other was both explicit in the words of the teacher and implicit in the activities. Both teachers also said that they expected they would learn from their students.

Attention to Each Student

During the first days of both classes, all students interacted with other students and with the teachers. Each student participated orally and in writing multiple times in each class session. While some students were more reserved than others, Linda and Sara took care to include all students. No one was invisible to the teacher or other students. On the first day of class, while students were working on a short writing assignment, Sara marked attendance and talked to each student individually. She also asked students to fill out an information sheet that gave students a chance to tell her any personal information that the student wanted her to know that might affect their participation in the class. One student reported having diabetes; another, a learning disability. Linda engaged students arriving early to class in conversation. She circulated during group work and talked to students during the break. Linda engaged students in a writing assignment and in discussion, the content of which helped her to understand some of students' hopes, fears, and misunderstandings about being college students. Both teachers took time to learn each student's name and something about him or her.

Setting Goals

During the first week of class, Sara engaged her students in conversations about course objectives. These conversations showed the students important aspects of the learning environment: that the knowledge they brought to the class would be valued and that they would set their own learning goals.

Instead of reading a list of teacher-formulated objectives, the students in small groups and as a whole class generated 2 lists, one "Habits of a Good Reader," the other "Habits of a Good Writer." As the whole class compiled the list, Sara took care to take the students' ideas and to use some of the vocabulary that she would be using to talk about the habits during the semester. These lists were written on large sheets of paper that remained in the classroom for the rest of the semester. (See Table 7.1 on the next page.) Sara kept the lists posted in the classroom and referred to them when a lesson pertained to one or more of the habits on the list or when assignments provided students with opportunities to practice the habits. For example, in one class session more than half way through the semester, Sara referred to "good writers ask questions" and "good writers conduct research" as students began work on interviews for the research paper they wrote on a career they were considering.

During the second class session, after the lists were complete to the satisfaction of the students and the teacher, each student picked some of the habits as goals of their own for improving their reading and writing. Students wrote their own goals for the class and kept them in their portfolios for the first half of the semester. At the middle of the semester, students reviewed their goals, assessed their progress, and set goals for the second half of the semester.

The way in which Sara orchestrated this conversation sent a different message to students, I think, than a reading of course objectives on a syllabus might have done. From

these activities, students could conclude that learners set their own goals for learning and have an important role in assessing their own progress. Implicit in the conversation is recognition that students bring with them knowledge of good reading and good writing. Each of them needs to work on aspects of reading and writing, but they are capable of seeing what they need to work on and directing their attention and effort to their own goals.

Table 7.1 Habits of good readers and good writers

Habits of Good Readers	Habits of Good Writers
Take their time	Take their time
Focus, concentrate	Journal/write-practice
Understand/comprehend what they read	Understand what they write (reread)
Practice, read a variety of material/genres	Have a purpose and stick to it (stay on topic)
Stop and question for understanding/recall	Think of the reader (audience)—make sense
Think about point of view (author's and reader's)	Brainstorm—use prewriting techniques
Practice for fluency	Keep an open mind/ creativity/ able to take constructive criticism
Make connections, relate to reading	Research
Visualize	Ask questions
Predict, educated guesses	Think about fluency—is it organized, clear? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar • Punctuation • Spelling Rich vocabulary (thesaurus/dictionary)
Inner voice/Metacognitions—Actively think about what you're reading	
Put yourself in the character's shoes	
Aware of feelings/emotions while reading	

Integrating Students' Lives into Class Activity

In Linda's class during the first week, one of the messages implicit in the class sessions was that students' lives, opinions, and concerns could be expressed and addressed in class. On the first day of class, students participated in a writing assignment for which they completed sentences about what it meant to them to be going to college and what their "concerns" were as they started the semester.

The first reading in Linda's class was one about choice and attitude. Students read the article in preparation for the second day of class. On that day, they discussed an anonymous compilation of the sentences they had written about going to college. (See Appendix D for a more detailed description of this assignment.) In small groups and whole class discussion, students shared ideas for how they could address their concerns, individually, collectively, and with the help of the teacher. Using the word "concerns" allowed students to talk about their fears without having to admit that they were afraid, although some of them referred to their concerns as fears during the discussion. Students brought up the article about choosing their attitude toward events as a way of addressing some of their concerns.

This theme, that students lives, opinions, and emotions, are integral to course content, was introduced with this writing assignment and discussion. The theme was reinforced throughout the semester through additional writing assignments, discussions, and conversations with the teacher.

In summary, during the first few sessions, the teachers communicated to students, in word and deed, important aspects of the learning environment they envisioned for the class. The aspects are summarized in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Aspects of learning environment introduced in first week of classes

Aspects of learning environment introduced in first week of classes
Taking on challenges, or risks, is inherent in learning.
Students are expected to interact with other students and learn from each other.
Each student is included in the class experience.
Students set goals for learning and assess their own progress.
Students lives, opinions, and emotions are valued and built into course assignments.

Activities and Assignments

An overview of the activities and assignments in which students participated during the semester helps to understand the emergent college student identities described in the

next chapter. I do not describe the conceptual content of the course, in other words, exactly what the teachers are teaching about reading and writing. Some of those concepts are evident when students talk about the shifts in their perspectives on reading and writing. Some activities were common to both groups of students and their teachers. Others were used only in one class or more frequently in one class than another, reflecting differences in teachers' personalities, styles of teaching, and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Routines

Linda routinely started her class with informal stories, asking students whether they had anything important to report. To transition from student talk to the lesson, Linda usually told students about something she had been thinking about on the way to work, or an experience from her past. She connected the stories to some issue in the class—the reading, students' homework assignments, or themes like personal values, goals, or persistence. The topics for the day were written on the board. Linda often began with review of concepts by eliciting information from students. She pushed students to explain and elaborate when they responded to her questions. She presented new material with examples and then moved to extended practice with new material. The practice nearly always involved pair or group work, followed by whole class discussion. Students might apply a new concept to an extended reading, or occasionally to a multiple choice exercise. Most classes included some sort of student assessment of their own learning or feedback to the teacher. In summary, the introduction of new material in Linda's class usually followed the pattern of review, explication, application, reflection. Most class periods also had extended work time, usually in pairs or groups, in which students applied reading or writing concepts in longer, on-going assignments.

In Sara's class when students entered the classroom the plan for the day was written on the board, along with any homework assignments or due dates students should

have in mind. Sara started each class period with a hands-on activity. She called these activities games. Students usually got out of their desks and moved around to complete the activity. When the classroom was not large enough, the group moved to a larger open hallway space that was not heavily used. In the activities, the students were presented with a problem. The relationship of the problem to course content was usually not readily apparent. For example, in one activity students in 3 different groups were assigned the task of building a structure with the drinking straws in a bag. However, the groups did not receive the same number of straws. In another activity, students had to throw paper in a waste can with their back to the can while other students tried to assist them. Following the activity students always had time to reflect and talk about what they learned from the activity. Connections students made to class work and life as the result of participating in the activities included the importance of communicating clearly, the effect a pre-set focus has on comprehension, how teamwork enhances performance, and the benefits of thinking outside the box. The activity linked in some way to the lesson. Explication of new material in Sara's class usually followed a pattern of discovery, reflection, explication, application.

Both Linda and Sara used selected readings from 2 textbooks and supplemental readings. Both used readings in class in order to model and practice ways to approach and analyze readings. In Chapter 8, as I recount students' reports of how their approaches to and opinions about reading changed, echoes of the language Linda and Sara used in their teaching can be heard. Both teachers also assigned selected readings as homework. Sara required regular "reading responses" in which students recounted what they had read and responded to the reading using one aspect of their "inner voices." (See Appendix C for an explanation of inner voice as Sara related it to reading.) Linda made a small number of reading response homework assignments. Most reading was done in class as practice for applying specific approaches to reading. Linda emphasized critical reading, helping

students to recognize author's audience, purpose, and tone. Sara assigned the reading of a book. Students could choose between *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Albom, 1997) or *The Last Book in the Universe* (Philbrick, 2000). All but 3 students read the book by Albom. Students met once a week in class over 5 weeks to identify and discuss themes in the books.

Both teachers provided opportunities for students to write short reflective pieces, assessing their own learning, a particular lesson, or classroom and teacher practices almost daily. These reflective pieces helped students to articulate and recognize their own learning or misunderstandings and served as feedback to teachers, which they used to adjust future lessons.

Extended Writing Assignments

Extended writing assignments connected to the course themes of self understanding, goal setting, career exploration and educational planning. The assignments are summarized in Table 7.3 below. Teachers designed the essay assignments with the intention of focusing students' attention on how they perceived themselves in the present and the future as well as the role they envisioned education playing in their lives. One of the assignments, the career exploration research assignment required students to interview a person at work in the career students were investigating. At the same time that students were working on aspects of composition like organization, development, vocabulary use, and mechanics, they were articulating to themselves and others their developing identities as students.

Feedback on Writing

Linda and Sara used strategies to give students helpful feedback on their writing and to encourage students to revise their essays, a habit most of them did not bring with them from high school. Linda included peer editing sessions as a frequent in-class activity. Students worked in pairs to give each other feedback on writing assignments. Students

usually read other students' papers for clarity of content and adequate and interesting development of ideas. Sometimes they helped each other with final editing of punctuation, grammar and spelling. Linda also conferenced with students individually to talk about their writing. She encouraged students to have other students read their papers outside of class. (See Table 7.3 below for a list of writing assignments used in each class.)

Table 7.3 Extended writing assignments

Assignment	Description	Class
"My Life" essay	Compilation of shorter assignments (who I am, experience(s) that shaped my perspective on life, five important things in my life, my inner voice, my goals, my definitions of success and failure) into an essay describing self	Sara
Career exploration research project and essay	Report on career investigation and interview	Linda, Sara
The Person Behind the Mask	Answer to the question, "Who is the person behind the mask?"	Linda
Back to the Future	Description of vision of the future and decisions required to realize the vision	Linda
Time Use	Discussion of personal use of time	Linda
Self Assessment Letter	Description of learning	Linda

In addition to short, focused revisions of parts of papers, and individual conferences with students, Sara organized 2 writing workshops, one for the "My Life" essay and one for the career exploration paper. Students met in groups of 7 or 8 during class time. Students chose whether to read their own paper aloud or to ask someone else to read it aloud. Without exception, students asked someone else to read their papers aloud. All students in the group had copies of all the papers. After hearing the papers read and following along, students had a chance to write comments on the papers. Students then commented aloud on the paper. Sara directed the students to say at least one thing they liked about the paper and one suggestion for improvement. Students often used the 6 traits of effective writing (Spandel, 2005) to frame their statements about the essays. The

writer of the essay then had an opportunity to say what he or she found helpful about the comments of the other students. Students collected all of the copies of their papers from fellow students so that they could review the comments.

Another way in which Sara encouraged students' assessment of their own writing and gave students her feedback was through a writing rubric organized according to the 6 traits of effective writing (Spandel, 2005). Before handing in their essay assignments, students assessed their own work with the rubric, which used a Likert scale and provided space for written comments. Sara made her assessment and comments on the same sheet of paper.

Outside of Class Activities

Teachers met with students a minimum of an hour per week outside of class. Linda worked in the Reading Lab, where several students worked with her one-on-one or in a group with other students. Sara scheduled 1 hour per week outside of class hours for whole class or small group activities or individual conferences. Students in Linda's class used a Web-based computer program to practice discrete reading and writing skills

Students had the option of participating in 3 career workshops and a Career Advising Day. At the career workshops, they completed interest inventories, received information about career opportunities in several job sectors, created resumes, and received help with education planning for specific degrees and certificates. On Career Advising Day, student who chose to attend met with program advisers from all areas of the college, transfer advisers for those interested in transferring to 4-year schools, and financial aid advisers. The purpose of the career activities was to make explicit for students the connection between their career goals and attending college.

Additional outside of class activities included a class excursion to a bookstore, participation in a ropes course in a mountain park, and wall climbing at the campus sports

facility. All of Sara's class went to a popular, independent bookstore within walking distance of the campus to purchase the novels for the class. For some students, this was their first visit to a bookstore, other than the campus bookstore. Four students from Sara's class and 1 student from Linda's class attended an outdoor ropes course activity focused on goals and community building. A small group of students participated with Sara on 2 occasions in the wall climbing activity and received tours of the campus sports facility.

Difficult Days, Lessons Learned

Each class had some difficult days, but the triumphs and successes are salient in students' reports of their learning and teachers' reflections on the semester. The problems encountered during the semester appeared to recede from their consciousness, at least in their interactions with me.

Each teacher struggled with her interactions with a handful of students. In Sara's class, Angela left just before the midterm because of a domestic crisis. Another student, who had been doing very well academically started to attend sporadically and then stopped attending all together after the midterm without explanation. Two other students missed a lot of classes, despite repeated resolutions to catch up and do better. In Linda's class, Jose and Elena dropped out of class. Jose and Linda did not make a positive connection, and Jose interacted minimally with other students in the class. Elena said on the second day of class that she had a pattern of dropping out of activities when she was half way to her goal. As the semester progressed she was increasingly distracted in class, missed frequently because of her toddler's and husband's health. She quit coming to class just before midterm.

Sara struggled with feeling angry when some students began coming late to class near the end of the semester. She worked not to take student tardies or absences personally, trying to see them as reflections of students' lives, rather than a criticism of her

teaching and effort with students. Linda went through a week or two of thinking her expectations for students were too high. We discussed her frustrations. Eventually Linda arrived at the following perspective:

I know I'm very critical. So I'm trying to be more focused on encouraging rather than criticizing. And I'm trying to be less judgmental and try to see what's behind the (students') behavior rather than reacting to the behavior and the words.

Not every lesson went well. One day the book discussion groups in Sara's class did not stay on topic. On another day, the tension in Linda's class about many students' failure to meet deadlines sidetracked the reading and writing lesson. Through it all, students learned from their teachers and from each other, through their own effort and the effort of their teachers. Teachers learned from their students. And at the end of the semester, students reported changes in themselves. Teachers reported feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction, as well as ideas for how to do some things differently in the next semester. In the next chapter, I document students' descriptions of their learning, the new perspectives they gained. From the students' words, evidence of stronger college student identities emerges.

CHAPTER 8

EMERGING COLLEGE STUDENT IDENTITIES

In Chapter 5, "Looking Forward to College," I documented students' views of themselves in relationship to college, learning, and their goals for the future at the beginning of the semester. In this chapter, I present students' reports of how they had changed and what they had learned at the end of the semester. Not surprisingly, given the content of the instruction, shifts related to students' perceptions of reading, writing, and careers are evident at the end of the semester. In addition, students reported greater competence in negotiating college systems, an understanding of the importance of reaching out to others, and a cautious confidence as they looked forward to the next semester. On the basis of student interviews, their writing, and classroom observations, I document students' perceptions at the end of the semester and describe the links the students made between the changes they perceive in themselves and the activities they engaged in during the semester. The Learning Activity Assessments administered by each teacher at the end of the semester showed students' estimations of the value of specific class activities to be skewed in directions that support the qualitative findings reported below.

Reading

Reading is a practice at the heart of academic communities. Students who do not read well, widely, or with curiosity are less likely to feel at home in academic communities than those who do. Adelman (2004) found evidence that students who need remediation in reading are less likely to persist to degrees and certificates than those who need remediation in math or writing. Given the central role that reading plays in academic

communities, the fact that 13 of the 15 students interviewed at the end of the semester reported reading more and liking to read more at the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester is significant. In addition to reading more, students talked about reading differently, reported reading for the purpose of better understanding themselves and their world, and gained confidence in themselves as readers.

Reading More

Carlos and Rosa provide examples of students' reports of liking to read more at the end of the semester than at the beginning. Both students said that they were surprised when they noticed that they actually liked reading. Carlos attributed the change to finding books and articles that engaged his interest. Rosa, on the other hand, perceived a more fundamental change in herself. She found herself looking for books to read. She contrasted her reading habits at the beginning of the semester and at the end:

At the beginning of the semester, I didn't have the habit of reading because I found this boring. My only way to look for the main point in the passage, article, or essay was by reading the first and last paragraph of the article and ignoring all the details; nevertheless, in some cases I didn't get the point and didn't find any logic to the reading.

By the end of the semester, Rosa could describe multiple strategies for approaching a reading and was delighted to find that focused attention to one page led to her desire to continue with the next. The central strategy she used was that of asking questions for which she sought to find answers in the reading. She found that asking questions of the reading held her interest even if she did not initially like the topic of the reading. She also found herself learning new vocabulary "everyday" and using word analysis and context clues to figure out the meaning of words without resorting to her English-Spanish dictionary so often. Rosa, Javier, Carlos, Alex, Omar, Ruby, Melissa, Michael, and Carmen all said they were reading more than they had been at the beginning of the semester and talked about reading materials that were not assigned for class.

New Ways of Talking about Reading

Students had learned new ways of talking about the process of reading, and with new ways of talking about reading came new ways of approaching the printed word. Charlayne described herself as an "active reader" at the end of the semester instead of the passive reader she had been. Many of the students in Linda's class described themselves as critical readers, reflecting the language Linda used in talking about reading and activities she organized for class. Carmen described her developing view of what it means to be a critical reader, echoing the approaches to reading that the students had practiced in class. She looked for the author's purpose, audience, main idea, and writing pattern. She discussed with her classmates whether points in a reading should be viewed as fact or opinion. During the semester, Carmen said, "Reading became interesting to me, and I just want to read more. Before, I didn't like it at all. You would just mention reading to me and my eyes would close." Carmen was especially interested in reading about pregnancy because she was expecting a baby after the end of the semester.

The theme of being a critical reader also emerged from Omar's self-assessment of his learning during the semester. He listed SQR (Survey, Question, Read), distinguishing fact and opinion, noticing the author's writing patterns, and figuring out the author's audience and purpose as strategies important to critical reading. Omar wrote about employing those strategies in his reading practice: "I adopted those skills to ensure that I am in the right track. . . . I don't finish reading unless I ask questions of what I am reading, what it is all about."

Ruby wrote about how her ideas about reading had changed. At the beginning of the semester she told me that she did not like to read as a hobby, that she much preferred watching movies. At the end of the semester, she wrote:

The first day I realized I was to take an English class at the beginning of the semester, I was not thrilled at all because I felt my reading and writing were perfect. I thought being able to write clearly, answer comprehension questions, and read fluently were all I needed to call myself a good English student. At first, I was engaged in academic reading that was scheduled for my studies; I never took the trouble to read anything which had no links with my academic performance.

Ruby referred to reading students had done in class on controversial subjects:

We were handed an article on America and the Middle East conflict, which made me know what was going on, because I hardly listen to the news, which I know is a bad thing, but through this class I now know what is to be expected. Another example is an article on embryonic stem cell [research]. I had never heard about this before because I thought it was for science students. But today I can boldly give my opinion when I am asked to share my views.

Finally, Ruby said that, although her "attitude towards reading has climbed to a higher level," she still had work to do to cultivate other reading habits:

For my reading, I am still working hard, trying to develop the interest and habit of reading more widely and rapidly than before. I plan on reading smaller books because the sight of bigger ones scares me from reading. I feel when I start with smaller books I will gradually not fear bigger ones.

Reading to Understand Life

In Sara's class, in addition to reading textbooks that included collections of essays, students read 1 of 2 books: *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997) by Mitch Albom or *The Last Book in the Universe* (2000) by Rodman Philbrick. All but three students chose to read *Tuesdays with Morrie*, a non-fiction account of the time the author spent with one of his former college professors Morris Schwartz during the last year of the professor's life. Over a period of 5 weeks, students met once a week in small groups during class to discuss their books. Sara prepared questions to guide the students in discussing their reactions and perceptions of meaning beyond the literal level. During the second group meeting, the discussion lagged, but for the most part there were earnest discussions. Several students commented on the importance of this learning experience to them. After reading *The Last*

Book in the Universe, one student commented that reading "helps us to think about the meaning of our lives."

Tam touched on this theme early in the semester during my interview with him. He said that one of the values of going to school was that it prepared students for real life.

When I asked for an example of how school prepared people, he brought up the reading of

Tuesdays with Morrie:

[Going to school] prepares for the real life. (Pause) Yeah, maybe some lesson I got from a book, from reading a book. Like the book called *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Yeah. One of the parts in the book is that the author, Morrie, he tries to say to the reader that life is too short, but it is really shorter for the person who is counting how many days he has left, but it doesn't mean that you have to give up. And he tries to use those [remaining] days to create something to make all the people think about it after he left the life. Yeah, that's the great lesson. And I think I will learn that and use that for real life because sometimes you feel that you, you feel sad, or something make you feel that you want to give up, but I think that at that time I will think about the lesson and I will try to be patient more and try to pick it up to solve the problems, and to pass it. That's the better way.

Cristina said that reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* helped her to understand herself.

That book helped me understand myself better . . . That book impacted my life. As I said, I know how to appreciate my mom and brother more than I used to do. That book had a lot of different struggles and real life things. I was reading at home the last few pages, and I was reading when Morrie was dying, when he told Mitch, if I will choose another son, I will choose you. And one tear [fell], right away. I was like, don't cry--no. It's just a book. But it was real. So I think that helped me understand myself better. That book helped me appreciate life, appreciate the things I have, thanks to the people that have been helping me out.

Roberto said that the book helped him to show his appreciation to his family more openly and led him to spend more time with them:

This semester, well I knew my family was important to me, but I didn't spend that much time with them. But like, after reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* and everything, that's another thing that made me change. . . I don't want what happened to Morrie—to wait till last minute like when he was dying and expresses his feelings but it was late. . . . Well, what it made me change is like I didn't spend that much time with [my family], you know? I don't spend that much time with them, like share some experience? But now I think like different, that I have to do it. It's better to do it now than regret it later by not telling them.

Anh said that she “loved” *Tuesdays with Morrie* and that it touched her heart. She marked many sentences because she wanted to reread them later. In the section “Careers and Majors” in this chapter, I describe how reading the book helped her to decide that she wanted to “chase her dream” and not go through life “half asleep”. Javier, too, said that reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* was an important part of the semester’s experience:

Oh and the book, the novel, I really liked the novel. I mean, I agree a lot with some points that the main character express and also I like the way of how he writes. I thought about it, and sometimes I compare the book to my life.

Gaining Confidence

Lydia reported a new-found confidence in her ability to read and write in English that she said was possible because Sara always kept coming back to points to be sure that students understood. Cristina, too, talked about new confidence and illustrated her confidence with an example of her own actions in class. I include her account because not only does it illustrate her growing confidence in herself as a reader and student, it also illustrates some important aspects of the classroom environment:

Another thing that surprised me was a test, not this last test, but the other one. It was take-home, and it was like a weekend, too. Sara gave us this article [about the events of] 9/11]. I love reading this stuff from real things that happened. I have been reading a lot of things about 9/11. I like that topic. I didn’t know the story. So it was hard; it was complicated. So I started doing it and I went over the exam to check if it was right or not. We were supposed to find the main idea, and it was Sunday and I didn’t find it. I went and went and went over it. . . . I wasn’t sure.

So Monday my mom dropped me off, brought me to school. From the house to school, I was reading the article again and I was like, “Mom, I have to find the main idea and I can’t find it.” “Yes, you have to find it; I know you can find it.” “No, no, no, it has topic here, but it doesn’t have the details.”

So I was so nervous because I wanted to find the main idea, and I was sure it was this one, but not really sure, but 95%. I got to the class and I asked [other students], “Did you find the main idea?” “Yes, it’s this one.” I didn’t say anything. I think that was mean, but in my heart, [I knew] no, it’s not. I asked Javier, “Did you find the main idea?” “No, but I think I’m going to use this idea.” I asked him which one and he told me. In my heart and my mind, no, it’s not the one you have. And I asked another, “Did you find the main idea?” He said, “No, this is hard.” It was hard.

Then Sara came and picked up our tests and she said, “If you don’t find the stated main idea, you can do implied.” So what I [had done] at home, I found the implied

main idea in my test. . . . We went over the test, the whole class together. Sara had the article there, and I don't know, something came over me and I stood up and I was like, "This is the main idea." And I got up and wrote it on the board. I didn't know why I did that. I was sure in myself. You have to trust yourself. As my teacher in high school told me, "You have to trust yourself. The first feeling you have, that's the right one." I don't know, but something came over me because nobody had it, nobody found it. And they were like, "No, this is the main idea." And something came over me. I'm so shy and that type of person that doesn't like to talk in class, and I do talk in that class even though my English is so bad. So something came over me, and I was like, "That's the main idea." Sara, she looked at me and she was like, "Where?" I stood up and I was like, topic, details, there is the main idea. She was like, "Yeah, that is the main idea."

Very surprising because I had an A on that test. I never thought I was going to have an A on that test. It was hard, it was complicated. I don't know, I just trusted myself. In that moment when I asked everybody and they didn't know the main idea, I was like, "That's the main idea." Because it was hard. Maybe because we're not on college level, maybe or something. But that moment was so--I felt good with myself because I was able to stand up and show them.

Cristina's story illustrates the interplay of several aspects of the classroom environment and Cristina's personal development. First, the work students did in the class was authentically challenging. Doing easy work would not have boosted Cristina's confidence or made her feel ready for college-level work. Second, the classroom environment was supportive, allowing Cristina, a self-described shy person, to break out of her usual behavior and the conventions of most classrooms. In order to illustrate her point to the students, Cristina jumped out of her chair, moved to the front of the classroom, picked up the chalk, and wrote her answer on the board, punctuating it with circles and arrows to make her ideas clear. Third, the classroom environment promoted dialog among students, in this case even as part of a test. Cristina's conversations with other students were essential to her testing of her confidence in her own judgment.

These characteristics of the classroom environment supported Cristina's development of her identity as a college student. While she still looked to Sara to confirm the correctness of her answer, she was able to assert her way of making meaning in front of her peers, and she was willing to make the assertion even if others did not agree with

her. She was developing a sense of her self and her perceptions of truth separate from what others thought.

Activities Related to New Perspectives on Reading

Students identified specific activities as influencing their perceptions and practice of reading: regular reading practice that required them to make sense of text, interesting content in readings, strategies for getting meaning, reading of book-length literature, and group and class discussion. I have added less dependence by the teachers on multiple choice questions and learning language to talk and think about meaning as important factors in students' shifts in perspectives on reading.

Use of Open-Ended Questions

Many developmental reading texts depend heavily on multiple choice exercises to provide students with practice in reading skills such as identifying main ideas, author's purpose, supporting details, and word meaning. The textbooks Sara and Linda chose for their classes had few multiple choice exercises. Homework and tests, including a prescribed departmental final, were not multiple choice, but required short answers or short essays. Linda used some multiple choice exercises when she introduced new concepts such as the use of figurative language and discriminating fact and opinion. However, she always asked students to apply skills to longer readings by asking them to formulate answers and questions, rather than having them choose from a textbook writer's possible answers. I believe asking open-ended questions and asking students to develop their own questions about texts helped them to adopt new ways of approaching reading directly rather than ways of approaching multiple choice questions. Students had to make meaning from the texts rather than respond to the meaning-making of textbook authors.

Cristina cited classroom reading and writing lessons and homework as the most helpful part of class. She thought that what she learned through the practice with text in

reading and writing would help her “throughout college.” She said that at the end of the semester she understood what she was reading about, something that she did not think was true for her in high school. Lydia credited explanatory handouts and explanations from Sara for her improvement in reading and writing. Anh appreciated that assignments gave students a chance to reflect on the meaning and significance of readings.

Meaningful, Engaging Readings.

Most students reported finding the readings they did for class interesting and engaging. In Cristina’s story, she noted the text for a test was related to the events of 9/11, a topic she found very interesting. Sara tried to choose readings that connected to students’ interests and challenged their thinking in some way. For example, one of the early readings in the class, a fairly easy one, engaged readers with a youthful protagonist engaged in mountain climbing. At the end of the article, students found their assumptions about athletes challenged when they discovered the mountain climber was blind.

In Linda’s class, students remarked on reading topics that provoked debate and discussion. Linda chose some controversial topics for reading, two of which were conflict between some Middle Eastern countries and the U.S. and a reading on embryonic stem cell research. These are both topics I would probably have stayed away from had I been teaching the class, the Middle Eastern topic to avoid making Muslim students in the class uncomfortable, and stem cell research because of my belief that the topic, like abortion, is polarizing, and that neither side is likely to learn from the other. Linda used the articles to illustrate author’s point of view, purpose, and audience, as well as for practice in distinguishing fact and opinion and identifying sarcasm.

Students who talked about reading about these topics commented positively. Neither of the Muslim students in the class, Omar and another student who did not participate in the study, reported feeling uncomfortable about the reading of an article, one with a strong

anti-Iranian slant. I asked them directly about the reading and discussion. Both of them said that they had the opportunity to talk about their ideas and beliefs. Ruby wrote at the end of the semester about feeling good that she could now “boldly express” her opinion about stem cell research.

Alex talked excitedly about how he had begun to read more. He linked reading about controversial topics, ones that allowed him to “argue” with himself, the text, and with other students as being one of the most important aspects of his learning in the class. He described the change in himself as a reader, “[My] reading has improved a lot, going from non-reading to reading—and reading a lot and reading constantly.” He described himself as becoming “more thoughtful” and looking for unassigned articles and essays to read in his two class textbooks. He described thinking critically about the content of the readings as a part of his learning: “Actually I take some initiative in doing it myself. And then actually kind of argue with someone else about the point. And then we come to a point that is comfortable. That’s what I have learned the most.”

Reading of Book-Length Literature

In Sara’s class students read one of two books in addition to essays and stories from textbooks and other sources. Students refer to the books as novels, even though one of them, *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Albom, 1997) is non-fiction. The second book, *The Last Book in the Universe* (Philbrick, 2000) is a science fiction novel dealing with themes of the value of literacy, territoriality, violence, classist societies, and human difference. All but Carlos, Eddie, and another male student chose to read *Tuesdays with Morrie*. All the students I interviewed from Sara’s class valued this assignment. As described earlier, students valued the reading of these books because they reflected on the meaning of their own lives and relationships as they read about the characters in the books. The positive

experiences students had in reading these books was connected by several of them to the intention and desire to read more than they had in the past.

Several students also saw connections between the reading of the novels and their reading and writing skills. Javier said he noticed that as he read the novel he was able to understand more vocabulary without looking words up in a dictionary. He then discovered that the new vocabulary found its way into his writing. Carlos said that as a result of reading the Philbrick novel and being surprised to find that liked it, he planned to look for more science fiction to read. Eddie noticed that he used his imagination to understand the writer's voice in the Philbrick novel.

The courses in the study combined the teaching of reading and writing, a practice different from other developmental courses in the college. Students reported seeing progress in both their reading and writing skills. Eddie, Javier, and Anh commented on the connections between the two skills. All three of the student talked about how the reading of the novel helped them improve their writing. When Eddie talked about paying attention to the voice of the writer of the novel he read, he connected voice n the novel to the development of voice in his own writing:

You know when you're reading a book, . . . and you're imagining, and you're thinking, and you get to feel like that author makes you feel with his voice, with his feelings. He makes you get into the story, makes you imagine that you're in that story, like in a way, get you in the story. And when [Sara] told me that I had a lot of voice, and inner voice, [in my writing], at first, I was like, what is that? But then, she explained, and I was reading myself, and I kinda know what she was saying. Well, I'm proud of that, because I didn't know, and I'm proud of myself on the writing.

Javier and Anh made even more direct connections between their writing and the reading of *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Albom, 1997). Javier noticed that as he read and learned more vocabulary, he began to incorporate the vocabulary into his own writing:

[W]hile I was reading, sometimes I was reading words that I couldn't understand before and then when I read it, I was reading it and then trying to understand it and three or four days later I was writing that word in the paper.

Anh talked enthusiastically about her love of the language she read in *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Albom, 1997) and about how reading influenced her writing. First she talked about learning new words, phrases and idioms:

Because like when I read it, I see some words, and I see the way the author [is] writing, and I learned from it a lot. Some sentences "the meaning of life", I love that word. And after, I try to write them. And some words, the vocabulary, and those words I never know, and when it's translated, it's the same word in Vietnamese, but I never tried that [in English] before so I tried to learn that word.

As Anh read and understood the figurative language in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, she began to use figurative language in her writing. She also gained a better understanding of the limitations of translating from Vietnamese to English in her writing:

All my writing, my figurative language, I learned from the book the most. Because like when you translate from Vietnamese to English, it's kind of weird, but like some words they use English, and it stick with me, and I just try to remember it. Yeah. I don't have to translate because sometimes it messes up and doesn't say what I want to say.

Anh also believed that the written reflections she did about *Tuesdays with Morrie* and other readings she did for class helped her with both reading and writing:

And I love, you know, you read the novel, and you respond something what you think about the novel. It really help remembering and just refresh yourself what you are thinking about the book, [whether it] is good or not. And like it also helps for your writing too because you practice to write.

Group and Class Discussion

One of the ways developmental reading is taught at the college is through self-paced, individualized assignments and tests. I believe that the individualized approach to reading instruction fails to take advantage of the learning that results when students share their ideas about what they have read in pairs, in small groups and in whole class discussions. For example, in Linda's class this kind of learning was evident when students

worked in pairs to discuss whether statements were fact or opinion, when they discussed their own opinions and experiences as they related to text, and when they worked together to puzzle out the author's purpose and audience. In Sara's class, student groups met regularly to discuss the novels they were reading. The discussions dealt with such weighty topics as family, mortality, and the choices people make for their futures. Discussion with others was a central part of the reading in both classrooms, as students and teachers worked together to make meaning from text. Group and class discussion influenced students' perceptions of themselves as readers and makers of meaning.

Table 8.1 New perspectives on reading

Perspective Shift Related to Reading	Students Reporting Shift
I read more.	Alex, Carlos, Carmen, Javier, Melissa, Michael, Omar, Rosa, Ruby
I have new ways of talking about reading.	Carmen, Charlayne, Cristina. Omar, Ruby
Reading helps me understand myself and life better.	Anh, Cristina, Roberto, Tam
I read with more confidence.	Cristina, Lydia
Activities Linked to New Perspectives on Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited use of multiple choice exercises • Meaningful, engaging readings • Reading of book-length literature • Group and class discussion • Language for making meaning 	

Language for Making Meaning

One of the changes I noted in students is that students talked about reading differently at the end of the semester than they did at the beginning. Both Linda and Sara used consistent ways of talking about reading that students appropriated for themselves, used with each other, and employed in their interactions with text. The new ways of talking about reading structured for students new ways of looking at reading and themselves and

their role in relationship to text. Using the language of Survey-Question-Read, Linda guided her students to interrogate text, to find out what meaning the text had for them. Using the terms *main idea*, *supporting details*, *stated* and *implied ideas*, both Linda and Sara modeled for students the language to talk about the process of seeking meaning in text. Students then began to use that same language to talk about their thinking. Asking students to become critical readers by looking for author's purpose, author's opinion, and to distinguish between fact and opinion, Linda helped students to develop new ways of looking at text. Students in her class began to call themselves critical readers to describe how they saw themselves as they thought about text in new ways. (See Table 8.1 above for a summary of students' perspective shifts related to reading.)

Writing

As with reading, student interviews, written self assessments, and classroom observations showed that students shifted perspectives about themselves as writers. Just as they learned new ways of talking about reading, they learned new ways of talking about writing. They also changed the processes they used when writing. Several students showed that they viewed writing as a means of communication, rather than solely as fulfillment of a school assignment. Students also demonstrated new confidence in themselves as writers. Students linked changes in the way they viewed their writing to classroom activities and environment.

New Ways of Talking about Writing

Linda and Sara framed ways for students to talk about their writing. Sara described 6 traits of effective writing for students to consider in their writing (Spandel, 2005). The six traits are ideas or content, voice, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Linda used the same concepts she used to talk about reading to talk about writing. Students learned to use the same language to examine their own writing that they

used to think about and understand the writing of others. Sara taught about the 6 traits using examples and targeted revision exercises of students' writing to make the meaning of the traits clear. Students set goals for their own writing, choosing traits they wanted to concentrate on for a particular piece of writing. They used the traits to evaluate their writing and to talk with other students about it.

In end-of-the-semester interviews as students from Sara's class talked about their perceptions of improvement in their writing, they used the vocabulary of the six traits. For example, Carlos identified "sentence fluency" as the area in which his writing had improved the most and talked about what he took as evidence of improvement:

[My sentences used to] be like all choppy and stuff and like now, they kind of flow. And I notice that because I read some of the work I used to do in high school, and the work I do now, and you can understand [my work now] and read it better.

Eddie, Anh, and Javier identified the development of their "voice" in writing as one of their accomplishments. Voice was defined in the classroom as the extent to which a person's writing engages the reader in a way that is compelling and authentic. Eddie described his pride in the improvement he saw in his writing at the end of the semester:

What I feel successful in me is improvement that I have in my writing. At first, I didn't know anything about the voice, but now I'm figuring out like how your inner voice and how your voice can really touch people's hearts through words. How just writing down some words can make you think a lot of things. I've never done it that way. I used to do freewriting, just getting all your thoughts onto a paper, and that's it, you know. But I didn't know how much voice it could have.

Linda tied the vocabulary for talking about writing closely to the way she talked about reading. Students talked about main ideas and supporting details in both their writing and reading. They talked about being both critical readers and critical writers. They mentioned using transition words and supporting details in their writing and as devices to help them understand what they read. Linda's students talked about their improvement in

writing in ways that echoed the way Linda used language to call attention to aspects of their writing.

Carmen talked about how her writing had changed by the end of the semester:

What changed me was the way to express myself on paper. What I do now is use the minor and major supporting details. I feel that by using these it makes your paper stronger. I think that's what I've done. And I also feel that when I write my papers, I use stronger and better words, just so I can sound better. . . . And I also feel confident about myself when I do my essays because I learned how to use transition words. And transition words are like words that lead one idea to another, and that's good for me. And just to back up my thoughts. Everything changed from that. Before, I would just write like little small things. I wouldn't back them up, and I didn't use supporting details.

Carmen gave the above description of her writing in response to the prompt card "change".

I think it is significant that she talked about how she writes at the end of the semester as a change in herself and linked the change to increased confidence. This illustrates connections among activity, in this case doing academic writing, and identifying as a student, as a competent member of the college world.

New Ways of Doing Writing

At the end of the semester, students talked and wrote about how they had changed the ways they went about academic writing. While all of the students said they believed their academic writing had improved by the end of the semester, Ruby, Carmen, Alex, Carlos, Eddie, Javier, Anh, Rosa, and Laura talked in specific terms about how the processes they followed in writing were different at the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester.

Free-Writing

Several students said that they had used free-writing as a part of their academic writing process before the semester began. Free-writing for them was writing as quickly as possible all the ideas that came to them on a particular subject. Some students said that free-writing had been the only step in their process. Eddie described his writing process at

the beginning of the semester: "At first I thought, essay, oh, just write on some topic, skim it, and turn them in." Alex, too, said that previously he had used free-writing to get his ideas down, but that he had paid little attention to organization and whether he had communicated his ideas clearly. Carlos said that during the semester he learned to use free-writing so that "it actually helps me out more." He talked about free-writing "without stopping and just flowing your ideas out and keep on going" and then studying the ideas on paper to find out how they fit into the essay.

Revising and Editing

Several students reported greater attention to and new strategies for revision and editing. Some students cultivated new habits of re-reading their work. For Eddie, the idea of revising and editing appeared to be new:

But then when [Sara] started [saying], like reread yourself, and read this, and do this and try to make yourself cross out or pass it to another person and make them grade you and get you comments, and I didn't know that.

Carmen's strategy for re-reading her written work was to read it aloud to herself because she found it easier to locate mistakes.

Mentioned more often than re-reading their own work was the habit of having others read their work before handing it in. Eddie described the biggest change he saw in his writing process:

Now when I'm writing something, I always get it to my mom, or to my cousin, or someone. Hey, put comments on this, or what am I going to change, or something. And then I would change that, and then I would take it to another person. What do you think? OK, thank you. . . . That's what I did with the [essay based on the career] interview. I was done, and I thought, this is just perfect, for me. And you know I thought, someone has to read this. I see my friend, and, hey, can you come here? Do you have time to read this? Yeah! So she started reading it and she put comments on it. Change this and this. And I was like, whoa, that's right. And after that I changed it even a little bit more. But then I turned it in to [Sara], and she put some comments, but at least I know I'm getting better. And now I think about it before I turn it in. I think twice.

Writing to Communicate

Carmen, Eddie, Carlos, Rosa, Laura, Anh, Javier, Roberto, and Alex all talked about how revision had become a part of their writing process to a greater extent than it had been before. Some students reported that part of the revision process for them was working to express their ideas more clearly. Carmen talked about using more supporting details in her writing. Rosa said she used examples of her experience to make her ideas clearer. Alex said that he reviewed his writing, paying attention to whether it communicated the ideas he had in mind, something he had not paid attention to in the past. Carlos noted that the step that came after free-writing for him was to review his ideas and "explain" them.

Ruby confessed at the end of the semester that she had not thought she needed instruction in writing or reading at the beginning of the semester. However, looking back at how she regarded writing at the beginning of the semester, she revealed a shift in understanding of the purpose of writing and a grasp of strategies to make her writing communicative. In the past, she said,

I was focused on only what the topic entailed. I did not relate it to myself by telling a story, giving examples or being specific to make it easier for the reader to understand what I was trying to say.

At the end of the semester, Ruby was talking about her writing as a communicative act, using the language about writing that she had learned in class:

Most important is being able to choose the right writing pattern to make it easier for the reader to understand the purpose of my writing. If it is to inform I will choose a list, if it is to instruct I will use a sequence, if it is to entertain I will write interesting things that will make the reader laugh, and if it is to persuade I will try to convince the reader to take my side of view.

Less Linear Process

Anh talked enthusiastically about how good she felt about the progress she had made in being able to express her ideas in English. She also noted that she found more flexible ways of approaching the writing process than she had in high school. She had always had problems writing introductory paragraphs. Her understanding from high school was that she had to write the introduction and a topic sentence before she wrote the rest of her essay. She described the alternative approach she had discovered to write essays:

You know I always have problems with introduction paragraph. When I try to write, I spend a lot of time for that one. . . . But now I write down all my ideas and my thinking and after that sum up all the ideas and then bring up the introduction paragraph. In high school, my teacher asked me to do the introduction paragraph [first], like do it in the group, like follow step to step. That's why it's hard for me. So now I change. In high school they always have a thesis statement. . . . But you know in this class I can say other sentences or use another word. I can use the implied thesis. I don't need to do the stated only.

Anh had discovered a more flexible, less lock-step writing process that worked better for her in her development as a writer.

Less Reliance on Translation

Lydia, Anh, and Javier, all relatively recent arrivals in the U.S. and very conscious of themselves as English language learners, reported that at the end of the semester they relied less on translation from their native language to English when they were writing than they had at the beginning of the semester. Lydia said that at some point in the semester, she began to write her essays in English and then return to "fix" the English after she had her ideas on paper. Javier characterized this change in the way he wrote as "one of the biggest changes" of the semester:

I really like how I could understand myself to just think in English and write it down in English. I really like the way how I started expressing my thoughts and ideas when I was writing and just making understand the other people what I was trying to say. That was a big change in me, and I really feel like I have a big improvement in that. Before that I was writing in English but expressing myself in Spanish. So, it was really, really different. And then, when I start thinking in English and writing in English, it was

a little bit different and I like that change, you know? It's better because sometimes I can express myself. I can express better myself and also other people can understand me better even when sometimes I don't make sense. And I really like that.

Notice that Javier described the change in his writing as a change in himself. He links change in the way he engages in an academic activity as a change in identity.

I think what Javier meant when he said that he “was writing in English but expressing himself in Spanish” is that the words he wrote were English translations of his thoughts in Spanish. He suggested this interpretation with his statement that he felt good about being able to “just think in English and write it down in English.” I followed up with a question for Javier about what he thought helped him to “make that shift from translating to not translating.” He understood my question and responded, which makes it seem likely that my interpretation of the above passage, that he spent less time translating from Spanish to English in order to complete his writing assignments, is accurate.

At the beginning of the semester, Anh said that writing essays was extremely time-consuming for her because she wrote out the essay in Vietnamese and then translated it to English. At the end of the semester, she described how she used translation in a much more limited way than she had at the beginning of the semester. Anh explained:

Writing is much more easy for me right now. I don't have to spend a lot of time to write an essay. And right now I'm just thinking in English and write it out in English, and [if] some word I try to write in English but I don't know the word, I just write in Vietnamese so then I try to translate to English [later].

Gaining Confidence

Cristina's story gave an example of a student's growing confidence as a reader. Carmen's story reveals the depth of her lack of confidence at the beginning of the semester and culminates with an expressive metaphor for how she felt she changed at the end of the semester. In response to an interview prompt, a card with the words “surprising” and “unexpected” written on it, Carmen said that she was surprised that she had been able

to complete the career exploration writing assignment because she got scared when she had to do big projects. She said when she heard about the project, she really did not expect that she would be able to finish it. Carmen surprised herself, however, and finished the project. When I asked her why she thought she was able to complete the assignment when in the past such assignments had overwhelmed her, she thought that one contributing factor was her friends in the class:

I had the back up of my friends. If I was stuck on something, maybe they would help me out. So having friends sometimes in class makes you want to keep on doing what you're doing. And just seeing other people achieving what they're doing makes you want to do it, too.

Her teacher's feedback also played a role in Carmen's growing confidence. Carmen described how she felt about herself and her writing at the end of the class with a metaphor that suggests a feeling of opening up, of freeing herself:

I just feel like I got out of that little shoebox [I was in] because my instructor mentioned to me that my papers were going good. I felt like I just pulled myself out of that old shoebox. And now that she told me that, I feel more confident in myself and feel like I can do better. So that experience kind of changed me, too.

Activities

In this section, I document the connections students saw between classroom activities and becoming better writers. Students tied their improvement in writing to meaningful and engaging assignments, interaction with peers, and feedback from the teacher.

Meaningful, Engaging Assignments

Some students mentioned finding the writing assignments engaging. Cristina and Lydia said the career exploration paper was being especially interesting for them. Lydia found the career exploration assignment important because, as she said, the subject of her career was about "the rest of my life" and because it helped her to see how in the following

semester she would already be starting the classes that would help her reach her goal of becoming a social worker. Cristina believed that, while the career exploration assignment was especially interesting, it was the cumulative effect of multiple chances to read and write that brought about the improvement in her writing. Alex talked about how the subject matter of essays and reading responses made him focus on communicating his ideas, something that he had not done previously in his academic writing. Students' reactions to the career exploration assignment and additional essay assignments related to students' career and educational goals are described in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Opportunities to Share Writing with Peers

In Sara's and Linda's classes, students had the opportunity to share their writing with their peers. Sara's students took part in writers' workshop sessions in which students read each other's work and gave each other feedback based on the 6-trait frame for evaluating writing. The workshops were structured to include both positive feedback and ideas for improvement. In Linda's class, students read each other's work and gave each other feedback, most often in pairs, sometimes in small groups.

Several students from Sara's class commented on the importance of the writers' workshops in their learning about writing. First, the workshops allowed students to gauge how their writing stacked up when compared to their peers without any sort of formal comparisons or ranking. Cristina thought that Lydia and Anh were much better writers than she, even though she judged their speaking proficiency in English to be about like hers. She noticed that they chose less common vocabulary for their writing than she did. She believed that even though she had improved her writing during the semester, she had a lot of work to do to be as good a writer as she wanted to be. Carlos said that he used the

writers' workshop to gauge the quality of his writing. Eddie said that he felt "inspired" by the writing of his fellow students.

Secondly, students said they got ideas about how to improve their writing from other students' suggestions. Javier liked the workshops. He did not think all of recommendations from other students were equally helpful, but he liked the process, which he described in this way:

When we are editing papers, I like that. You hear ideas. You tell why it helps you and then you move to the side where you don't think that it's very helpful. So, I like that, too, you know? The way of how he or how she tried to analyze different papers? And you can bring your ideas what you think about it or how you can make a change a little bit and then how you receive the same thing from the other students, and I like that.

Carlos echoed Javier in his assessment of the writers' workshops, "The workshops helped me a lot. You actually see and hear other people's comments and the way I could improve myself. That helped me a lot. I got a lot of ideas from that."

Carlos contrasted the writers' workshop approach to his writing classes in high school:

Actually, [the workshops make] a lot [of difference in students' writing] because back in high school like you had to do it and just hand it in to the teacher. He'll give you a grade and that's it. Here, you actually see what your quality of work is and actually hear other people telling you how to improve it and giving you ideas and everything. And basically, it's just like showing you how to be a better writer in another way. Back in high school, I used to be nervous on turning my work in. And they usually didn't even take the time to help out on my work. Or like when I had to read something of mine to like the whole class? Like I really didn't like that. But now, that changed a lot. I could read anything that I write because I know they could like give me ideas and stuff like that. They're actually helping me out.

I think Carlos identifies some of the advantages of a workshop approach to writing. As he noticed, the workshop extends the audience for students' writing from an audience of one, the teacher, to an audience that includes the whole class. Secondly, the activity appears to have helped Carlos gain confidence about sharing his written work with a larger audience. Carlos' higher comfort level in the college class might be explained by the kind of safe

learning environment created by the teachers and students, by a more mature attitude on the part of Carlos and his fellow students than they had in high school, or by some combination of the two.

Anh talked about her initial nervousness about reading her work in writers' workshop, and how she came to feel comfortable with it when she saw the usefulness. She hypothesized that the experience of overcoming the nervousness and getting to know the other students better was helpful to her and others in learning to interact with others:

You know like I don't know [how] other people are thinking but with me when people read out loud my writing, I feel very nervous. I don't know, but I feel very nervous. But after doing it over again, and people just saying things to me, I learn a lot from them. And when I hear their writing, it has some interesting experiences. They have very nice ideas I can use for my writing. We can use each other's ideas. That's a good one. When they do it, when we do the writing workshop, we know each other better and like we feel comfortable with each other and I think we learn a to feel less shy and nervous when we face with other people.

As noted in the previous section titled "New Ways of Doing Writing," Anh, Lydia, and Javier said that they used translation less in their writing by the end of the semester. Both Javier and Anh talked about the value they placed on being able to speak to their peers. Anh's experience with peers in high school had been different from her experience with the other students in Sara's class, although demographically, there was not a big difference. Anh, who came to the U.S from Vietnam during her high school years, had attended a large, urban high school with a large majority of Hispanic students, many of whom spoke Spanish. The college class was also heavily Hispanic, and students often spoke Spanish with each other. However, Anh interacted with her Hispanic peers much more than she had in high school. In high school, she said the Spanish speakers had social groups and the Vietnamese speakers had their own separate groups. Anh described the difference between her high school and college experience in response to the interview prompt to talk about surprising or unexpected experiences in the first semester of college:

So about surprises. Like I told you, all my [college] classmates [are] very nice. In high school, I just speak Vietnamese with my friends and speak English with the teacher but not communicate with a lot of my classmates. But in this class we are all like a family, you know. And I don't know, but they accept me in their group. They always try to let me talk and give my opinion and what I'm thinking. That's it. It's not like in my high school. And because is a small class, so like everyone has a chance to communicate with each other, and that's good.

Javier connected his ability to think in English more easily and to write without translating his thoughts to the opportunity he had in class to speak with students who did not speak Spanish. Javier liked having both the support of having fellow Spanish speakers in the class and the chance to speak English with students. He cited his conversations with Tam, a Vietnamese speaker, as important to his growing ability to think, speak, and write in English. Javier saw that translating his thoughts directly from Spanish to English was not an effective way to communicate with Tam. He described his experience:

With him, I was sometimes trying to say something that he would understand if he speak Spanish, but I couldn't do it. I was trying to think it in English and then tell it to him and then like trying to make him understand what I was trying to say. When I was just speaking with people who don't speak Spanish, that helped me a lot, a lot.. Like I think about that. Like okay, I'm just trying to say something and [if] I try to say in Spanish for them, it won't make sense. So, let's try to say in English.

For the most part, students from Linda's class did not mention working together on their writing as important to their progress in writing. Alex, Rosa, Laura, and Carmen were exceptions. Alex said that working with others to make sure his writing communicated the ideas he wanted was important for his progress. Rosa, Laura, and Carmen worked together outside of class to read each other's writing and to give each other feedback. Linda met with them outside of class to talk with them and model for them how they could work together. Rosa and Laura said working together was an important part of their writing process. Carmen said working with "her friends" was an essential part of her growth in confidence, completing her assignments, and staying in school for the semester.

Teacher Feedback

Students in both classes cited teacher feedback about their writing as important in their progress. Linda met by appointment outside of class with students to talk with them about their writing. For Omar, these conferences were particularly important. In the end-of-the-semester interview with me, he talked at length about the aspects of his writing that still needed improvement and mentioned the conferences with Linda as being important for him in understanding what he needed to work on and in disciplining himself to meet deadlines.

Laura talked about how group conferences with Linda, Carmen, and Rosa helped her to understand how to read her friends' essays and to give them helpful feedback. Laura understood how to support her ideas with details by working one-on-one with Linda on some of her papers. Charlayne and Carmen talked about the importance of getting positive feedback on their writing from Linda because the feedback gave them the confidence to keep going. As Carmen said, "And now that she told me that (my writing was improving), I feel more confident in myself and feel like I can do better."

In addition to her participation in writers' workshops, Sara gave students feedback on their writing in some individual conferences during group work or revision sessions in class. Her primary tool for feedback was a writing rubric organized around the 6 traits (Spandel, 2005). Like Carmen in Linda's class, Lydia commented on how Sara's feedback helped her to gain confidence in her writing. It was through Sara's comments on her writing that she understood what she needed to work on to improve her writing, and through improvement, she gained confidence.

Eddie noted that Sara's feedback helped him to be conscious of what he did well. He talked about his learning and Sara's feedback about his writing:

And the way she teaches, like explain things step by step and then suddenly you've got it. And she told me on one of the papers—I [thought] I was writing like

normal—like I used to, and she told me—I was surprised—you're making progress. I was like, did I? It was like something I didn't expect.

I asked Eddie if, after Sara's comments, he was able to look at his writing and see his own progress. He indicated that he thought the paper was good when he handed it in, but when he got it back with Sara's notes about where and how he had improved, he understood better what he had done to improve his writing.

One of the things that happened for students in both classes, I think, was that they gained a framework or lens with which to critique and improve their own writing. One of Sara's practices was to use the 6 traits writing rubric (Spandel, 2005) to help students examine their own writing before handing it in to her. Sara asked students to read their papers and rate themselves on the rubric, which used a Likert scale for each of the 6 traits and had space for both students and Sara to comment on the paper and each of the traits. Javier commented on rating his own writing and the importance of teacher feedback on the rubrics. He reported being pleased when ratings began to match Sara's:

You know, when you have to rate yourself and write your comments and then she's going to write her comments, I feel really successful proud when I start like seeing her circles [on the Likert scale] the same as [what] I circle, you know? . . . That's something that helps you a lot. And then the notes when she was telling me like word choice. I thought, oh, I don't believe that I have [good word choice] because my vocabulary is not that great. And then she writes like, your vocabulary has been improving, is getting rich and—I don't remember the other word. But, you are getting good ideas. And then, my voice, I had a lot of voice in my paper and then she say like, I really like the way you expressed your ideas. You know, that's just something that made you feel proud of yourself like, okay, I'm trying to do good work. And with this I know that I'm doing it. If not the best, good, you know?

Opportunities for Teachers to Learn about Students

Another aspect of having writing assignments that allow students to explore their goals, dreams, fears, and opinions is that it provides teachers with an opportunity to learn more about their students. Charlayne, Jimmie, and Michael in Linda's class had a history of mental health problems. Through the writing assignments, Linda found out a little about

students' histories, which allowed her to tailor her encouragement, her insistence on deadlines, or her relaxing of deadlines in ways that were more likely to result in student persistence. At least one of those students, Charlayne, recognized the connection between what she revealed to Linda about her struggles with depression in one of the writing assignments and the way that Linda encouraged and pushed her to do her work, to come to class, to spend less time in front of the television and sleeping.

Table 8.2 New perspectives on writing

Perspective Shift Related to Writing	Students Reporting Shift
I talk about writing in new ways.	Anh, Carlos, Carmen, Eddie, Javier
I use free-writing differently.	Carlos
I use strategies for revising and editing more than I did before.	Alex, Anh, Carlos, Carmen, Eddie, Javier, Laura, Roberto, Rosa
I work to express my ideas clearly and interestingly.	Carlos, Carmen, Ruby, Rosa
I write my introductions after I write the rest of my essay.	Anh
I use translation from my native language to English less when I'm writing in English.	Anh, Javier
Reading improved my writing.	Anh, Javier
I am more confident about my writing.	Alex, Anh, Carmen, Elizabeth, Javier, Omar
Activities Linked to New Perspectives on Writing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful, engaging assignments • Opportunities to share writing with peers • Teacher feedback • Reading 	

Another student, Michael, revealed his struggles with the face he presented to others in a writing assignment in which Linda asked students to write about why people wear masks. Michael, who was alternately talkative and withdrawn, cooperative and belligerent, wrote about his two selves, and how each protected the other. Michael's essay begins:

Michael and Midnight are two different people, but are the same person. Mixing two different people has its ups and downs. Michael is a person made to hide Midnight. Although I am Midnight, Michael is a big part of me.

He goes on to describe Michael as “his business manager,” the part of him that gets things done right, and Midnight as his “protector,” the “hard as a rock” part of him that does not let anyone get close to him. While Michael had problems far beyond what Linda could deal with, she was aware of the complexity of his problems, partly because of his writing, and was able to adjust her teaching and interactions with him so that he was able to complete the course and enroll for the next semester. (See Table 8.2 above for a summary of shifts in student perspectives on writing.)

Careers and Majors

Career exploration was incorporated into instruction most directly through the career exploration research assignment, which required students to research a career option, interview someone working in that career, and write a report of their information gathering activities. Linda also assigned an essay that she called “Back to the Future,” which required students to imagine themselves 5 years into the future and to describe what they would need to do in the present in order to make the future happen as they described it. In addition, students had the opportunity to participate in several career workshops and in a career advising fair during the semester.

Relating to Past Experiences and Values

Students brought with them to the semester histories of inclinations and experiences that influenced their thinking about career choices during their first semester in college. Some of them were continuing on trajectories they had mapped out for themselves but had interrupted for various reasons. Others were leaning toward career choices because of values they held. Both positive and negative experiences informed their choices.

Carrying on Interrupted Trajectories

Charlayne and Angela were restarting their efforts to reach career goals that they had set for themselves in the past but had been unable to pursue. Angela studied accounting in her home country, the Philippines, before coming to the U.S. When she got to the United States, she tried short term training programs like certified nursing assistance and bartending school with the goal of becoming employable fast. At the beginning of the semester, she was still working as a shift supervisor in a hospital kitchen, but she was bored with her job. She was waiting for the evaluation of her transcripts from the Philippines to see if some of her coursework there would count toward an associate's degree in accounting. During the study, Angela interrupted her college work once again just before mid-semester. Struggling in an abusive marriage, Angela left Denver to join family and friends in another state to get away from her husband and start once again. As happens so often to educators, students disappear from our lives, and Sara, Angela's advisor, and I wonder what life Angela has made for herself..

Charlayne was starting college for a second time after dropping out of a 4-year school in another state due to pregnancy more than 10 years earlier. She wanted to reach her long-held goal of becoming a nurse. She had become a certified nursing assistant in order to earn money in a field related to her goal, but due to mental health issues, she was unable to continue to work or to retain custody of her three children. Although she continued to struggle with depression, Charlayne saw education as the way out of her dilemma, the road to her career goal, economic independence, and the ability to make a life with her children. She knew that she had a long road ahead of her including remedial courses in math and nursing prerequisites. During the course of the semester, she did not report changing her goals or her perspective on education.

Economic Independence for Women

Five of the women talked about the importance of education for them as women. Charlayne said that she hoped to be married one day but that she wanted to be able to buy a house for herself and her children in the meantime. Lydia, Ruby, Rosa, and Angela all came from cultures in which women are less likely than men to participate in higher education. Each of them regarded education as necessary for their economic independence.

Career as Service to Others

Several students mentioned that one of the factors in their career decisions was the desire to be of service to others. In Chapter 5 in the section "Helping Family," I described in some detail the feelings of responsibility many students felt for the economic well-being of their families. Here I describe the desire to serve others outside the family group. Charlayne talked about nursing as something she had always been interested in and also as one of the things she could do to "help people." Rosa described her choice of psychology as related to careers chosen by an aunt and an uncle and influenced by finding her high school psychology class interesting, but she gave as her primary reason for the choice the desire to help people.

Javier was still struggling with his career decision, but at the end of the semester he was leaning away from becoming a chef and towards being a bilingual teacher or advisor. The idea of becoming a chef was one that he had while he was still in high school in Mexico. The idea of becoming a bilingual teacher or advisor stemmed from his experience of being a high school student learning English in the U.S. He talked about his thoughts:

Now I have an interest to teach because I could teach the guys, and the child[ren], and the people who came in the same way that I came, you know? Without learning, I mean we don't know how to talk, we don't know how to write, we don't

know how to communicate basically. So I was thinking of that, and I went, like, OK, bilingual teacher, and like I say, I like to be social, and I will like to work as an advisor because I think I could do some good advising. And that's one thing that all my friends and my family told me, you're good at giving advice. In Mexico, they told me, oh you should be a psychologist, but, no, I don't like that. So I came here and I was thinking about that, helping the people in cultural studies and social studies.

Ruby, who was planning on a career in business administration, explored the idea of becoming a teacher for the class career research assignment. Although she may have chosen the topic because she was able to interview her father instead of finding a stranger to interview, she commented on what she thought the rewards of being a teacher would be:

Well, passing your knowledge on to others and seeing others progress. It makes you proud. And I like children. I like to work with children. Not high school level. Young children, teaching them new words.

Ruby added that she would only consider being a teacher if she returned to Africa. She could not imagine being a teacher in a U.S. school. Her dilemma brings up an element in career choice among immigrant students. Sometimes career choice is influenced not by what students feel they have a talent for or enjoy doing, but instead by pragmatic considerations such as the level of English proficiency they think is required, by a deep lack of job market knowledge, or by the inability to imagine themselves in a particular career because they have not lived in the culture long enough.

Past Experiences

In Chapter 4 in the section "Connections to Future Years," I described how experiences during the high school years led students to consider particular career directions. Sometimes those experiences directed students toward certain careers. For example, Carlos' interest in studying art was encouraged by his high school art teacher, and Cristina's experience with a police youth auxiliary group influenced her decision to

study criminology. On the other hand, Laura was able to eliminate nursing as a career option after an experience shadowing a family friend who worked as a nurse.

Other students were motivated to think seriously about career directions after working in jobs they did not like. Michael described custodial work he did in a military complex, and then outlined his thinking about his interest in graphic design:

And so I mean that was like the most disgustingest job I've ever had, and I was just like I have to do something else and I'm like, well what am I good at? I'm good at drawing, and I'm good at video games, so I thought, how do I tie those both together? Be a game designer. No. Be a game analyst. No. So it was like graphic design. Oh, I can draw some flowers or some monkeys and tell somebody, this is your new logo. You know it's not hard, so I figure, yeah, I might as well go to school now and [work towards that degree].

Although Armando had a fairly positive experience working for a fast food chain, he was sure he did not want to do that for the rest of his life. (See Table 8.3 below for a summary of factors that appeared to influence students' career decisions.)

Table 8.3 Influential factors in career and major choice

Influencing Factor	Students Reporting Factor
Pursuing a long-held goal after an interruption	Angela, Charlayne
Economic independence for women	Angela, Charlayne, Lydia, Rosa, Ruby
Desire to serve others	Charlayne, Cristina, Eddie, Isabel, Javier, Lydia, Omar, Roberto, Rosa
Responding to family expectations	Anh, Armando, Cristina, Tam
Experiences during high school	Anh, Armando, Carlos, Cristina
Experience in menial jobs	Alex, Michael

Family and Career Decisions

One interesting aspect of several students' development of career goals during the semester was their engagement in positioning and repositioning their goals in response to family influence and pressure. Several students reported that their families exerted some pressure or made suggestions about career choice. Armando's family told him accounting would be a good career and major for him. However, he was considering nursing as a

career because he thought it reflected his interests more than accounting did. Cristina was fairly certain of her career choice to become an FBI agent at the beginning of the semester. Her mother, however, worried about the danger of the occupation. Cristina said that while her mother was supportive, she did not really want her only daughter to put herself so obviously in harm's way. Cristina said, "I told her if I'm going to die, then I'm going to die." Nevertheless, she was thinking of alternatives at least in part in response to her mother's concern.

Anh and Tam struggled with their families' expectations about their careers. Tam appeared to have found at least a working resolution of the dilemma. In class discussion and one-on-one informal conversations with me, he said that his family wanted him to earn a lot of money and that they wanted him to be a doctor. He had no interest in becoming a doctor. "My parents don't seem to realize," he said to me one day in class, "that if you make a mistake as a doctor, people can die!" He did not think he could choose such a high stakes profession just to please his parents. At the beginning of the semester, he mentioned both architecture and fashion design as careers of interest to him. He investigated architecture for his career research assignment, interviewing a working architect in his home. He dressed up on the day of his interview and reported animatedly during the next class session about his interview. He was impressed by the architect's self-designed house, learned more about the work of an architect, and talked enthusiastically about this career option, including the appearance the architect gave of earning a lot of money. Choosing a career direction that fit his artistic talents and satisfied his parents desire that he have a high income allowed him to accommodate his interests and talents and his desire to meet his parents' expectations.

Anh's family had advice for her about careers. As with Tam, the advice did not match her interests. Like Tam, she also felt pressure to earn money in order to make her

family's life better. Both Anh and her mother loved to travel, and they shared a dream that Anh would earn enough money for the two of them to travel around the world together. She was considering becoming a doctor because in her view that would allow her to earn enough money to accord her family the lifestyle they all wanted. Anh's sister-in-law suggested Anh study accounting because she could work as an accountant without speaking excellent English. From my experience in working with Vietnamese immigrant students, accounting is a common choice as a major. Anh talked about her thoughts regarding career choice at the beginning of the semester:

But right now, I want to do something to know about what I want to do in the future. I'm not really sure about my marketing because like marketing they request you know speaking really good to have conversation with other people to sell and buy stuff, but I'm not good at that. So my sister-in-law told me to take accounting, but it's so boring. This job is so boring. You're faced with a lot of numbers and just do numbers. I hate numbers. I love math, but not really numbers. I love traveling. So I think marketing will make me travel a lot. So I love that job.

At the end of the semester, Anh was entertaining the option of "chasing [her] dreams" against the advice of her family. She talked about how reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Albom, 1997), a class reading assignment, influenced her thinking:

Just like about Mitch's (the narrator in *Tuesdays with Morrie*) struggle about his living. And like he want[ed] to be a famous musician, but then he had to let it go to find another job to have more money. And that's what I struggle about, too, because like my family you know like everyone said business marketing is hard to find a job when you graduate, and so just go for the doctor. But I don't like doctor. But I'm still thinking about that. I don't know which one I have to choose, and you know like, my mom wants to travel around the world, so she said like she wants me to have good job, and have a better salary to take her everywhere she wants to. That's why I want to think about the doctor. And then when I read [*Tuesdays with Morrie*], it said like you need to find something like meaning to your life so you don't feel like half asleep because you don't chase your dreams. So that's why I think I'm just choose marketing right now and try to learn it, and if what happen in the future, if I don't have job, I won't feel regret for what I choose.

Omar talked at the end of the semester about how Linda's "Back to the Future" essay assignment helped him to visualize his adult self. He talked about the assignment:

[Linda] told us to write on our papers saying that let's assume we're in 2012, which was really good. I think I talked what was on my mind, what I want to do, what I was thinking about 2012, five years from now. I believe . . . I should be adult who can take care of his problems. I don't have to depend on my parents at that time to ask questions, and to tell me what was the right thing to do, to you know, to live my own life, to get married, and all those kind of stuff,. Yeah it was real exciting, and I like the way she presented [the assignment to] us. God knows, but I hope everything will go true the way I write.

Laura, too, showed a shift in decision-making about her future career. She described the decision to listen to her own mind instead of the minds of others. Linda, her teacher during the semester, recognized Laura's desire to please others and urged her to pay attention to her decisions, not only those related to career, but in other areas as well, and to ask herself whether she was making a decision for herself or for others. Laura recounted what helped her to make this shift in how she made decisions:

One time in class Linda had asked, is what you want to do for you or for someone else? So that really made me sit down and think, do I want to be a nurse for me, or am I doing it because [a family friend is] one, and she says it's a good idea, and you get paid a lot. Because I think I just wanted to do it because she was doing it, and my brother is going to be a doctor, so everybody's like, oh my god, he's a doctor. And me, I thought I just wanted to do it to make everybody else happy. . . . But now what I'm going to do is veterinarian, that's what I am set on doing. I think it's just because she had asked that question, is what you're doing for you or for somebody else.

Clearer Visions at the End of the Semester

Anh, Tam, and Laura had clearer ideas about their career decisions in relationship to the influence of their families at the end of the semester than they had at the beginning of the semester. Other students reported feeling firmer and "clearer" about their career directions as well. When I asked Eddie if he saw his future differently at the end of the semester than he had at the beginning of the semester, he replied,

More clearly. Before I knew I wanted to be a massage therapist, but now I know more about how to do it. I know there are different areas I can specialize in and I know the next steps. I know how to reach the goal.

The theme of being clearer about the educational path required to reach career goals and having more ideas about the options within a career area was repeated with other students. Carmen was also interested in massage therapy. She reported that the research assignment helped her to stick with her choice and to understand the various options for massage therapy.

Dave began the semester with undefined career goals. He knew that he wanted to transfer to a university. That was the path expected in his family and the one taken by his older brother. When I asked Dave at the beginning of the semester what he wanted to study, he replied, "No idea." Dave talked with Sara, his teacher, and in the class about his interests in skateboarding, mountain climbing, and music. For the career research assignment, Sara connected Dave with a local journalist who wrote about music. Dave interviewed him and decided to pursue coursework in music and journalism.

Carlos' story of career exploration during the semester was especially interesting to me because it represented an example of the importance of respecting students' current perspectives. Carlos stated at the beginning of the semester that his career goal was to own and operate a tattoo business. In class presentations in which students talked briefly about their interests, Carlos talked about one of his tattoo designs. His career exploration research included interviewing a tattoo artist.

In the interview at the end of the semester, Carlos talked about how unsure he had been at the beginning of the semester about whether he would stay in college. In response to the proud/successful card in the interview, Carlos responded, "Oh, I mean like—whew—my success during the semester! I was able to finish my classes, so I was proud of that, that I actually didn't quit or anything." I was a bit surprised by the mention of quitting because Carlos had not communicated any doubt about going to college in my previous conversations with him, so I asked for more explanation. He explained,

Because at the beginning I was like, this is probably going to be hard, and I'm not even sure if I'm going to finish it and everything. So, like by the end, I was kind of proud that I just kept on going and not even thinking about stopping or anything.

At the beginning of the semester, Carlos had not been sure that the college could offer him what he needed to meet his goals, and without the people who helped him to understand how college programs could work for him, Carlos said, "Like for sure, without anybody helping, I probably would be already quitting."

The accepting and respectful stance of fellow students and his teacher to his career aspirations were important to Carlos persistence, but I think another event during the semester was pivotal. About 4 weeks before the end of the semester, the program held a Career Majors Advising Fair at which students had the opportunity to talk with college program advisers. Once again, Carlos's interest in tattoo art was taken seriously. The adviser from the art department connected college art courses to Carlos' art world and made it clear that students with similar interests were successful students in the college's art program:

Like that lady from the Art Department, . . . she asked me if like I ever did graffiti and stuff? Like I told her, yeah. She said some graffiti artists actually come to college and everything. So like it's graphic design. And she's going like, basically what graphic design is, just like grabbing ideas and stuff and putting them all together. I'm like, that's kind of related to tattooing. And like I really didn't know that until she told me.

The adviser went on to talk with Carlos about how he might want to combine business classes with graphic design classes in order to be prepared to run his own business.

Carlos looked forward to future semesters with a stronger commitment than he had at the beginning of the semester. In his words, "Sometimes it might be hard and everything, but for sure I'm not going to quit because I know now what I'm going to get out of it." Knowing that college could help him reach the goals that he set for himself was a major factor in his decision to stay for the following semester.

Imagination and Careers

Some students remained undecided about their career directions at the end of the semester, but they were thinking and imagining themselves in careers. Omar had put aside the idea of majoring in public administration, an idea he may have had because of familiarity with government bureaucracies in Kenya and Somalia, when he was told by an adviser that in the U.S. entry level jobs are often linked to degrees in business. He was looking again at computer science, even though his personal interest was history. His imagined future, as described in his "Back to the Future" essay, included running for political office in his home country Somalia. Alex had gathered more information about teaching, photography, nursing and mortician science as a result of class discussions, career workshops, and the career research assignment. Cristina was still focused mainly on her interest in criminal investigation after an exciting interview with an FBI agent but was expressing some doubts about her choice as she weighed her mother's concerns for her safety.

In an interview at the end of the semester, Javier gave an account of his confusion about career choice. However, this interview lacked the desperation he described in his first interview when he looked back at the anxiety he felt about his future when he arrived in the U.S. He talked about imagining himself in more than one career and about weighing his options:

Like I told you, in one side I am teaching an ESL class or [I'm] a science teacher, and at the same time I see myself as an advisor. On the other hand, I always look at myself as the chef with my little hat and everything, working in the kitchen, getting a good payment. So I'm always thinking about it, trying to make the best decision for myself, you know, the decision that in the future I won't regret. Because that's another thing that my dad told me, never regret the things that you have done, because the things that you have done, that's your future, that's your basis. And that's the only thing that I do: I picture myself in both ways, and I know that the time is coming, and I am going to have to make a decision again, and I know that the decision that I am going to take is going to be the best. Or I hope so. I'm just going to deal with it. Whatever it is that comes is going to be hard, I'm

going to deal with it, and if I can't do it, I'm going to go for another thing, but I would never give up. I'm just going to go through it all the way to get it.

What I find particularly heartening in the above excerpt from Javier's interview is his ability to regard his future with equanimity and with determination to reflect and act upon what life brings him.

Activities That Influenced New Perspectives

Discussion about careers and educational goals was built into class activities. As a result students talked with teachers and with each other about their goals and how to reach them. The discussions were linked to conversations and writing about students' ideas about who they were and what their personal and professional goals were. The data show evidence that students' development in their understanding of their careers and educational goals were connected to the career research assignment, the interview they did in conjunction with that assignment, the "Back to the Future" essay assignment in Linda's class, advising opportunities, and discussions with teachers and fellow students.

Career Research Assignment

Most obviously, the career research assignment influenced students' ideas about careers. In Sara's class, I observed students talking to the class about their interviews and participating in a writers' workshop activity in which they commented on each other's career research papers. For example, Cristina interviewed an FBI agent; Tam, an architect; Carlos, a tattoo artist; Isabel and Lydia, a social worker; Eddie, a massage therapist. Student interview comments showed the value they placed on the experience.

Lydia thought her career research paper as the best of all the papers she wrote. In fact, Sara commented to the group during the writing workshop that she thought Lydia had done a particularly good job of integrating information from several sources into a coherent paper. Lydia said that she dedicated a great deal of time to working on the paper because

the subject was so important to her. Being a social worker, she said, "is what I want to be doing for the rest of my life." Working on the paper, she said, "inspired" her. She was excited, too, that during the next semester she would be able to take an introductory course in human services, a first step on her career path.

Interviews with Professionals

Several students identified the interview portion of the assignment as an important part of their first semester experience and especially influential in helping them be more certain about their career goals. Sara connected Roberto with a friend of hers who was a Los Angeles police officer. Roberto, who was not given to demonstrative enthusiasm and was definitely not one to overstate emotions, described the interview as "fun". Before the interview, however, Roberto was quite nervous, worried about whether he would be able to express himself adequately in English, especially on the telephone. Roberto reported that the police officer was "a nice guy," a judgment he thought he could make even though the interview was by phone. The details Roberto gathered from the interview about working as a police officer helped him to feel more certain about his career choice. In addition, Roberto identified the interview as one of the experiences during the semester that led him to "think different." He found it remarkable that the police officer told him to call back if he needed anything more and to contact him when he finished his studies if he was looking for a job. As a result of this experience, he changed his thinking about asking for help, especially from people that he did not know. Roberto explained, "I think by asking is the way you get to the place you want or to the people [you need to talk to]."

Eddie said he understood that the purpose of the interview assignment was for students to "get to know" their careers. He interviewed a massage therapist and commented on the satisfaction the therapist got from making the other person feel better.

"You get to work with that person, and you see that benefit that you're giving them," said Eddie.

The excitement that students felt about their interviews was contagious. Eddie noticed the excitement, too, and commented on it in my interview with him:

Something that really got me, my attention, the way that everyone would explain themselves. When Isabel and Lydia want to be social workers, and you seen that love for helping each other and helping others to raise their kids up, you get feeling from that. You get, like whoa! That's passion. Or like Carlos, he would be talking about tattoos, and the way that he would talk about it: Art is this, and art is that. And for me with massage, massage is not just moving your fingers around the back. It's just getting to know that person's body. You see the passion. You know [Cristina who wants] to be in the FBI, you see that emotion. You see I want to do this, and I want to solve that case. You see that passion. It touches you. You see that interest in everyone. . . . When everyone starts talking and reading their introductions [from their essays], you get to see what they want, you get to see what they're feeling. . . . It's kind of an expression of life. That's what I saw in every , career, that's how I put it. If you're going to do it, it's not because it gets you money, it's because you feel comfortable in it. It's because you want to work on it. It's because you feel good.

I think that the way Eddie talked about the "passion" of his fellow students demonstrates the value of organizing classrooms so that students share their ideas with each other, not just with the teacher. The students inspire each other with their desire. Eddie put it this way:

And people may not notice, but once you sit back and just listen, you will see how [people] change. Once you sit back in the class, you start listening to everyone and listen to every single opinion. We get to the same point, some times in different ways, but we still get to the point. I think that's the main thing that catch me. That got to me a lot in the class, seeing their interest in what they want to do.

Eddie noticed a difference between the first essays that students shared with each other in writers' workshop and the essays about careers:

Yeah. It was way different. At first, we were just explaining ourselves. I'm this and I like to do this and I like to do that. But when you read the essays, comparing them, you can see the differences. When they talk about career, they're talking about passions. . . . The first essays were general, a kind of introduction, but then you get into a specific topic and you see a change. You're feeling that, whoa, this person's dream is to do this. It gets you.

Finally, Eddie noticed that as he listened to the other students read their writing and then compared his own writing during different parts of the semester, he understood himself better. He commented, "I was comparing my own papers. I saw the difference in my own writing. You get to know yourself more."

"Back to the Future" Essay

In Linda's class students wrote an additional career-oriented essay. She called the assignment "Back to the Future." Students were asked to describe their lives 5 years into the future as if that were the present, and then to reflect back on the actual present as if it were the past. Students envisioned their futures using language that embodied those future dreams as present accomplishments. They wrote about decisions they would have to make in their college years in order to achieve the future they envisioned. Some students got quite creative, imagining a moment in the future with considerable, descriptive detail.

I was struck by how the assignment resulted in students looking at several aspects of their lives and how they were interrelated. In other words, students did not write only about their work lives, but about how they envisioned the integration of their personal and family lives with their careers. Two themes that emerged in these essays were ones that were evident in the interviews: the importance of family and the connection students made between earning money and having the lives they wanted.

The essays also offered additional insights into the thinking of individual students. Laura reiterated her determination to be less dependent on the opinions of others in making decisions. Armando showed again the desire to prove others were wrong in their estimation of him. I discovered that Omar imagined returning to Somalia and running for political office. Ruby saw herself as an accountant in a bank in California. The choice of California reminded me that she had told me how much she hated cold weather. Most of

the students imagined themselves married. Two interesting exceptions were Carmen and Laura. In Laura's future, she had decided to put off marriage. She was occupied with opening an animal shelter and saving money for a trip to Africa. Carmen, who in reality was pregnant with her first child, imagined the child as a 5-year-old. She imagined herself unmarried, working as a massage therapist, and about to complete a business degree, which would help her open her own massage therapy business. From the viewpoint of her future, she offered advice to young women in the situation in which she found herself during the study: "My advice to all pregnant teens: Don't stop pursuing your goals. Keep going to school, and don't let anybody put you down. Keep reaching for that star."

Advising and Discussion

Part of the progress most students made in relationship to careers was a more concrete understanding of what they needed to do in college in order to reach their career goals. Students had several scheduled opportunities to meet with the FastStart program adviser and a career guidance expert. In addition, they had the opportunity to attend a session with college program advisers scheduled just for FastStart students. Teachers built attendance to these advising sessions into class activities and assignments, increasing the likelihood that students would take advantage of these opportunities. In Carlos's estimation, without the guidance he got from advisers, he would not have been able to see how college would help him to reach his personal goals.

Reading and Discussing Literature

While the influence of writing assignments about career choice and visions of the future have predictable connections to student learning about their career choice and the place of education in their lives, the influence of reading literature is perhaps less expected. In Sara's class, the reading and discussion of *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Last Book in the Universe* were connected with students' reflection on their goals, values,

connections to family, and mortality. As documented above, several students connected the reading and discussion of these books with changes they saw in themselves. (See Table 8.4 below for a summary of perspective shifts related to careers and majors.)

Table 8.4 New perspectives on careers and majors

Shift in Student Perspective	Students
I have new ideas about how to respond to family pressures about careers.	Anh, Cristina, Laura, Tam
I am more certain or more specific about my career choice.	Anh, Carmen, Carlos, Dave, Eddie, Laura, Lydia, Michael, Roberto
I imagine myself in a career.	Alex, Javier, Omar
Activities helping to shift perspectives on career choice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career research assignment • Interviewing a professional • Back to the Future essay • Advising and discussion • Reading and discussion of literature 	

Negotiating Systems

Another aspect of student learning was the negotiation of college systems. Almost all students reported knowing what classes came next for them at the community college, evidence of knowledge of the advising and course requirement systems. Two students, Roberto and Cristina, had arranged their transfer to a 4-year college on the same campus, along with financial aid packages. Two students, Michael and Roberto, learned to negotiate the financial aid system. Neither of them had financial aid awards at the beginning of the semester but with the assistance of program advisers and, in the case of Roberto, with some luck and persistence, both students received retro-active financial aid for the semester of the study and for the subsequent semester.

Roberto's story of his quest for financial aid shows the difficulty some students have in negotiating the financial aid system. When Roberto came to the community

college's financial aid office before registering, he was told he did not qualify for financial aid because of an error his parents had made in the way they filed their income tax returns. He considered quitting school when he got that information. However, he decided to inform himself about the possibility of other scholarships by asking at the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), a federally funded program on campus. There he learned that by filling out a form with more information about his parents' income and taxes, he would be able to qualify for a small amount of federal financial aid. He went to a third counselor to check the forms about his parents' income to be sure that he had filled them out correctly. He was looking forward to the next semester at a 4-year college, where he would have additional scholarship money through a program serving children of migrant agricultural workers.

Asking Questions, Seeking Help

One of the reasons that Roberto was able to get the information he needed to receive a financial aid award is that he developed a habit of asking questions. He was just one of several students who talked about discovering the importance of asking questions and asking for help.

Roberto said that the experience of interviewing the Los Angeles police officer by telephone for his career research paper was important in making him "think different" about dealing with people he did not know. He explained what he meant by thinking differently:

Well, I asked if him if I ever needed his help again, if I could call him back and he said, anytime. So, that made me think different. Like even though if you don't know that person, if you ask . . . , I think by asking is the way you get to the place you want or to the people [that you need to talk to].

In high school, Roberto said that he did not ask many questions because he thought people might laugh at him. In college though, he had changed. "Here," he said, "I ask more questions. So, I learn more."

Lydia said that when she got confused, usually because not knowing English well enough, she asked for help “to clarify.” She said that she had not asked for clarification when she was in high school because she “didn’t have the confidence” in herself. In her opinion, the main reason students do not ask questions is that they lack confidence.

Cristina also said that she understood the importance of asking for help, a lesson she had learned in high school when she was studying math. Carlos, too, cultivated the habit of asking questions:

Like there shouldn’t be a reason like where you can’t find something out because there’s always a person who’s going to help you when you’re on campus. Or, they could tell you who to go to.

Charlayne pointed out the role teachers have in creating an environment in which asking questions is safe and valued:

I was surprised what a good teacher Dr. Linda was. She made it easy to learn. If you didn’t understand something, she would stop and make sure you understood it before she moved on to something else. I really liked that about her because usually, even at the college stage, they just might put it on the board. If you get it, you get it. If you don’t, you don’t. When you didn’t understand it, she would stop and make sure that you did. You wouldn’t be afraid to raise your hand and say, “I need help! I need help! That is something I will take with me [after the end of the semester].

New Relationships with College Peers

In previous sections of this chapter, I described ways in which students formed relationships with their peers during the first semester of college. Anh from Vietnam was able to communicate with her Spanish-speaking peers more easily than she had in high school. Roberto had left behind his high school peers and was beginning to form relationships with students whom he saw as more mature, who like him “cared about their future.” Carmen described how having friends in her class helped her to gain confidence and complete assignments she would not have been able to do in the past. Many students formed friendships that supported their academic engagement. Some students also discovered some of the opportunities to participate in activities on campus outside of class.

Laura was becoming more assertive in her relationships with her peers. Inside and outside class, she formed good, collaborative relationships with Rosa and Carmen. She was also working to change her relationships with long-time friends, most of whom were not in college. She thought that she had been too susceptible to the desire to please her friends. She had the habit of dropping what she was doing whenever a friend called. At the end of the semester, she wrote:

[I am] making sure I don't let my peers keep me from concentrating. To keep myself on top, I need to stand up and do what's right, even if those around me disagree with me. I know if my friends get mad, they are not true friends. Friends want the best for their friends.

Carlos said that during the semester his view of what it meant to be a student "changed a lot in that little short amount of time." He expected going to college to be "boring," that his routine would be "just get out of school, do your work, go home." He found instead that for him college was a place where a person is "your own individual," who makes "your own decisions." He described himself as being "more open" than he had been in high school. Sara introduced Carlos to recreational opportunities on campus by going with a small group of students to the campus rock climbing wall. Carlos gave that as an example of the opportunities for students on campus. At the beginning of the semester, Carlos did not really expect to take part in the life of the campus or develop relationships with other students. He was surprised to find that student life was quite different for him.

Rosa talked about a similar change in her views of what it means to be a student. Before college, Rosa thought that staying on campus before or after her classes would be "a waste of time." She came to understand that going to class and then going home to study alone was not the best way for her to learn. She often spent hours on campus, working on her essays with her friends, reading their work, asking them to read hers. She used a program on the computers in the lab area to work on her English language skills.

She also went to the career workshops that were open to students in her class. "At first," she said, "we just went for the pizza, but we also learned something." She was convinced that her academic work was better because she worked with friends than it would have been if she had continued to work alone at home as she had in high school. She summed up how she felt about college life at the end of the first semester:

What is important to me is that I feel I'm going in the right track. I feel secure or safe about the studies and all the things in college. I thought it was going to be very, very hard, and it is, but not too much. I can do it.

Learning and Grades

Armando, Cristina, and Rosa exhibited a shift in their attitudes toward grades during the semester. While most students remained focused on grades as indications of their learning and success, a few students talked about how grades had become less central to their perceptions of their success.

Taking Responsibility

Early in the semester, Armando talked about how his attitude toward doing homework had shifted from high school to college. In high school, his goals in school had been to have fun, get at least a D, accumulate credits, and graduate from high school on time. When he talked about learning in high school, it was through his participation in an extra-curricular business club and through his job. His comments about homework indicated that he had shifted to seeing himself as more responsible for learning in the college setting. He owned the work and the learning in his college class:

And high school it was like, if I don't get it, I'll just go copy somebody. And well, in college you could go copy somebody, but I don't know, it just don't feel right doing that anymore. So like it's my work, and I have to do it. I can't rely on other people.

Grades as Markers of Success

Lydia and Javier, both very engaged and responsible learners, regarded grades as important measures of their “success.” At the beginning of the semester, Lydia said that she was disappointed in the grades she got in the class the first time she turned in her portfolio of work. Her first reaction was to feel sad, but her second reaction was to work harder on her homework. Her second portfolio grade was higher. When I asked her what she would do if she did not get as high grades as she wanted, she said she would ask for help and work harder. She talked about how getting good grades was a motivator for her to study hard, how she liked “to win,” and that the importance of getting good grades had been emphasized by her parents. She recalled a time in middle school in Mexico when she had started to get poor grades. Her parents took her to school to talk with the teacher. After that parent-teacher-student conference, she began to work hard in school. She continued to see getting good grades as a way to make her parents proud. At the end of the semester, Lydia expressed pride in achieving, not just “decent” grades as was her goal during her first semester, but “good grades.” She credited her improvement to her teacher’s effective teaching. Lydia did not focus on grades to the exclusion of learning. In fact, she said, “I love to learn.” However, she did see good grades as a measure of her success and as an important goal.

Javier also saw good grades as a goal worth working for and as a mark of his success. The pressure to get good grades was a motivation to do his best:

When I was in Mexico that was one of the things that helped us students to make us more responsible—like the pressure, working under pressure. That’s one thing, that always pushing. Like it pushes us to do the work. And also you have to do it good because if you fail that term, what you have to turn in, it is affecting your grade.

Javier’s work ethic is expressed in the aphorism: “Anything worth doing is worth doing well.” In Javier’s words,

I just grew up with that mentality that when you are responsible, you do your work. Do it as well as you can and that's all. If you won't do it good or you're just going to do it to turn it in, better not do it.

While Lydia was sometimes surprised by her grades, Javier indicated that he usually knew what grade he was going to get for an assignment before he handed it in:

Because I know that if I only write out some sentences like whatever, it won't work. And I already know the grade. Like I believe that any person can see what will be the consequence of what they do, you know? If they just write like something and whatever kind of thing, they're going get a lot lower grade.

Learning, Not Grades

In contrast to Lydia and Javier and other students interviewed at the end of the semester, Cristina and Rosa showed shifts in their perspectives on the importance of grades. They talked about shifting their focus from the grade they got to what they learned. At the beginning of the semester, Rosa was already focused on academic success. Like Javier and Lydia, she brought with her from her experience in Mexican schools a strong academic work ethic. However, Rosa reported seeing her academic goals differently at the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester. Rosa said that before the first college semester she had focused on her grades. She was happy if she got an A and did not think about or evaluate how much she had learned. The change she said was "in the way of learning." She would pass the class, she said, but the grade was less important than the "knowledge and benefits" she had gained. What would matter at the end of her studies would be knowledge, not her academic record. This change in view came, said Rosa, in part as a result of Linda's emphasis on learning over grades. Rosa said that Linda's comments caused her to reflect on her past experiences in school: "I analyzed my life in the past and the classes I have taken. And I didn't learn anything. Just maybe I get an A or B, but now if someone asked me, I don't know anything." Rosa went on to talk about what she had learned in the class, not about the grade she earned.

Similar to Rosa, Cristina in Sara's class talked about a shift away from thinking so much about her grades. In high school, Cristina said, she was always concerned about "my grade, my grade, my grade. I have to know, A or B." One day, she said, Sara told her, "Don't really care about the grade; care about what you learn." The advice resonated with Cristina:

And that is still in my mind, right there [pointing to her head]. That's true; don't care about the grade, care about what you learn. I do. Now I do care about what I learn. I know in English I have a B or an A; I don't know. For math, I have a low B and I don't really care about the grade. What I care is just about what I learned.

See Table 8.5 below for a summary of additional changes in students' perspectives.

Table 8.5 Other new perspectives

Shift in Student Perspective	Students
I can negotiate the financial aid system successfully.	Michael, Roberto
I learn more when I ask questions.	Charlayne, Lydia, Roberto
I can trust other people enough to seek help.	Carlos, Charlayne, Roberto
My classmates are interested in my ideas.	Anh
I can learn from other students.	Alex, Anh, Carlos, Javier, Eddie, Roberto, Laura, Rosa, Carmen
I resist peer pressure and follow my own goals.	Laura, Roberto
I can participate in campus activities of interest to me.	Carlos, Eddie
Spending time on campus studying with friends is a wise use of my time.	Rosa
Copying homework from another student is not something I want to do in college	Armando
What I learn is more important than my grade.	Cristina, Rosa

Student Self-Assessment

In addition to conversations with teachers, the regular practice in both classes of having students assess and articulate what they were learning helped to shift students' focus from grades to learning. As described in Chapter 5, students spent some time during nearly every class period reflecting on the meaning of activities or what they understood or did not understand. Students set goals for themselves and assessed whether they had

reached those goals. In addition to the department-prescribed final test in Linda's class, students wrote "letters" to her describing what they had learned during the semester. This practice of self-assessment and reflection deemphasized the importance of letter grades for some students and provided all students with an alternative way of viewing their learning.

Looking Forward to the Next Semester

Students reported feeling proud that they had finished the first semester of college. Omar talked about his pride in being a college student: "I'm proud that I'm enrolled in college, and I'm feeling confident, responsible that I chose to be a college student."

Part of students' sense of accomplishment was that they were closer to their goals.

As Roberto put it,

Another thing I feel proud of is I know that next semester I'm going to be closer to my degree. I'm going to be taking classes that are required to get the degree. So, that's what makes me proud—that I know I'm getting closer. Moving on.

Lydia would be taking classes related to social work. Carlos was starting a business class. Michael planned to take a graphic design class. Roberto and Cristina were transferring to a 4-year college where they could begin working on degrees in criminal justice. Had they not been enrolled in the FastStart program, completing two levels of developmental coursework in reading and writing in one semester instead of two, they might not have felt the sense of having made progress toward their goals.

Javier had been especially conscious of the time he would need to reach his goals. He had considered going to a vocational school when he found out how many developmental courses were required before he could begin coursework for his major. When he heard about the possibility of completing the developmental coursework more quickly through FastStart, he had decided to enroll in the community college. When I asked

him at the end of the semester, how he saw his future differently than he had at the beginning of the semester, he replied:

A little more closer, you know? I'm going to take a college-level class [next semester] and also I made an improvement in my writing, in my reading, too, and also my speaking. So, I like the change. I just like the change of how I've been improving little by little, not a big change but a noticeable change. From using bad past tense to good explanation of my ideas. So, I like that.

Students were looking forward to the second semester in college with more

confidence and less nervousness than they had their first semester. Rosa was one of the students who had gained confidence. She would be less shy, she said, no longer relegating herself to the back corner of the classroom, more willing to engage with other students in the class. She attributed her gain in confidence to the progress she had made in learning English. Cristina had described how very nervous she had been on her first day of the semester, but she thought she would be less nervous in the second semester. She explained, "You know what college is like already. You did a semester already. You know what's going on, what's going to happen, what you're going to do in class. I feel less nervous."

However, some trepidation and nervousness remained. Students wondered if their "college level" classes would be a lot different from their developmental classes. Cristina said that, although she was not as nervous as she had been at the beginning of the first semester, some nervousness remained because she would be transferring to a 4-year college. She said if she could earn a 4-year degree at the community college, she would stay because she felt comfortable there. She asked me in the final interview, "Are the college level classes the same like this, kind of? Or there's more homework? Or what do you think?"

Students approached the semester with clearer understandings of what came next on their education pathway. Most had registered for classes for the next semester. Only

Alex was unsure of what classes to register for next because he had not yet seen an adviser. Javier had his next semester schedule decided but was worried about the following semester because he was getting inconsistent information from advisers and friends about what classes he needed to transfer. Carmen was going to take the semester off while she had her baby. She had tentative plans to return in the fall. Michael had major legal issues to deal with. His plans to return in the spring semester depended on a judge's decision.

Overall, students had a firmer commitment to and sense of belonging as they looked forward to the next semester. Omar summed up how he felt about the next semester in a way that captures the determination and purposefulness mixed with awareness of difficulties ahead evident in my conversations with many students:

I'm feeling ready to do whatever I can to get started. I already got started, but to reach my goal, not to look back, don't give up. I know there's a lot of stress and distractions and sometimes you lose focus, but I would like to maintain on the right path, to keep straight, to go ahead, and get my destiny.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In Chapters 4 and 5, students looked back at their experiences in high school and forward to college. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and the classroom environments they created with their students. Chapter 7 documents shifts in students' perspectives on reading, writing, and their career and educational goals, as well as changes in some students' views on seeking help, relationships with their peers, and the meaning of grades. Their stories give voice to their emerging identities as college students. In this final chapter, I discuss the results documented in the previous three chapters in relationship to the theoretical framework described in Chapter 2 and implications for practice. The chapter clarifies how framing the problem of student persistence in community colleges as a problem of identity negotiation can help developmental educators to approach their work in different ways.

Beginning with Kegan's (1982, 1994) subject-object distinction and Baxter Magolda's (1992, 1999 2001) application of Kegan's theories to college learning environments and moving on to sociocultural learning theory, I show how theory relates to the work of the teachers and the learning of the students in this study. I suggest ways in which this theoretical framework and the results of this study can shift how community college educators view their work. I describe some implications of the study for practice in high schools and community college classrooms. Finally, I call on community college administrators to make professional development of full and part-time community college faculty a higher priority in planning and resource allocation.

Kegan's Subject-Object Distinction and Students' Narratives

Kegan's (1982, 1994) lens focuses on what people say about their experience.

Using his lens, careful observers can make a best guess about whether a person is subject to a particular experience or object to it. As subject to experience, people are fully in the experience, living it, and feeling the emotion of it. When they are object to the experience, they can examine it and assess the meaning of the experience for their lives. When the students in the study were able to talk or write about what the experiences of high school and college meant to them, their words gave evidence of their learning. By looking at student interviews and writing with an eye toward whether the student takes a subject or object perspective to his or her experience, I was able to identify and describe some of the student learning at a level that affected the sense of self.

For example, during the course of the semester, Anh moved beyond her confusion about the conflict between her family's pressure to choose a high-paying career suited to someone with a low level of proficiency in spoken English. By the end of the semester, she was determined to pursue a career that reflected her own interests. She moved toward becoming a person who considers family in her choices, but whose choices are her own and not her family's. Rosa and Cristina shifted their perspectives on success and accomplishment in school from one that valued grades as measures of success to one that valued learning. They showed evidence of being on the way to becoming persons who value their own estimation of what they learned instead of persons who depend on another's judgment of their accomplishment.

Not every student changed in the same ways as Anh, Rosa, and Cristina. The previous chapters showed thematic groupings of students' reports of their experience. Of significance for the study is that all the students interviewed saw changes in themselves

and that they connected the changes to their experience in their first-semester developmental education class.

The interview data for some students showed evidence that they were both embedded in the subjective experience of their lives and seeking to make sense of it. Armando and Laurence, to different degrees, struggled with what they saw as their families' low expectations for them. Part of the significance of going to college for them was proving themselves to others. Carlos still felt puzzled and somewhat dismayed by what he saw as a high school teacher's negative reaction to him.

I do not want to imply that students who test into developmental classes at community colleges are somehow remedial in identity development. A major task of intellectual development of adults is to make sense of our lives in a changing world. The students did not come to the college and the class unable to or unengaged in trying to make meaning of their lives. As students in developmental classes, they were not necessarily less able in this respect than same age students at 4-year universities. Javier, for example, had clearly spent a lot of time and energy agonizing over the meaning for him of his family's move from Mexico to the United States during his high school years. He had come to some peace with the move, or at least a stance towards it, and to a determination to live a life that brought him satisfaction no matter what obstacles might be thrown in his path. Javier was working hard at figuring out who he was and how to be in his world before he walked into a college classroom. In fact, one of the big advantages of using the identity negotiation frame is that it shifts our focus from students' skills deficiencies to the resources they bring with them to address this developmental task of negotiating identity.

Javier believed that formal education beyond high school would play some role in shaping his future. Some students, like Lydia, Rosa, and Tam appeared to be quite convinced of the important role of higher education in their lives. However, many of the

students in the study were less sure. Even for the students who appeared convinced of the importance of higher education, uncertainty remained because of a variety of factors including immigration status, English proficiency, family and economic pressures, health and legal issues, and lack of clarity about career goals and educational pathways to those goals. This uncertainty is probably characteristic of most students in developmental education, many students in community colleges, and many students at all institutions of higher education who are in the first generation of their families to attend college. One of the clear findings of the study is that for all students in this study, attending college was not an unquestioned, inevitable station on the trajectories of their lives. Attending college was a choice and sometimes a tentative one.

In this study, Kegan's subject-object lens provided perspective on individual students' lives and thoughts and helped in identifying important changes in students' perspectives. What I think the subject-object analysis shows clearly is that the students in the study were engaged in revising their ideas about how to learn, defining themselves in relationship to learning and education, thinking about their responsibility to others, and seeking a balance between interdependence and autonomy. In light of the results of this study, I believe that classroom environments that support or connect to the personal developmental work students are already engaged in are more likely to foster students' development of an identity that includes being a college student than those that use only an academic skills development focus.

A Learning as Identity Development Frame for Educators

Kegan, Baxter Magolda, and the Classroom Environment

Baxter Magolda's work in applying Kegan's theories to the development of young adults in higher education provides a framework for examining and designing learning environments that support student identity development, as well as a framework for

professional development for faculty. Building on Kegan's (1982, 1994) work on the development of the adult self and on her own research with young adults in their 20's, Baxter Magolda (1999, 2001) identified 3 defining questions people in their 20s are asking: How do I know? Who am I? What kinds of relationships do I build with others? In other words, the questions are ones related to epistemology, identity, and relationships with others. Educators can foster classroom environments in colleges that give students the opportunity to address these questions in relationship to the content they need to master, the skills they need to learn, and the relationships they need to build. Students who are able to address these questions in the college environment are more likely to form identities as college students.

The teachers in this study make statements of belief about teaching and learning that align with Baxter Magolda's (2001) assumptions about the nature of knowledge and learning. (See Table 5.1 on p. 189 to review the teachers' statements of belief.) Baxter Magolda suggests three epistemological assumptions:

- Knowledge is complex and socially constructed.
- Self is central to knowledge construction.
- Expertise is shared mutually in knowledge construction.

The language Linda and Sara use is more closely tied to practice, but elements of Baxter Magolda's assumptions can be seen in Linda's and Sara's statements. The social element of Baxter Magolda's assumptions is evident in Linda's and Sara's beliefs in the importance of fostering community among students and establishing relationships with each student. Baxter Magolda says knowledge is constructed. Similarly, Linda and Sara believe that student activity and student meaning making are essential in learning. Baxter Magolda's assumption that expertise is shared mutually is reflected in Linda's and Sara's belief that the teacher is not the sole knowledgeable authority in the classroom. The centrality of self

to knowledge construction is seen in Linda's and Sara's assertions that students should set their own goals for learning, formulate questions they want to answer, and articulate answers that make sense to them.

In line with the assumptions about knowledge construction, Baxter Magolda (2001) describes 3 characteristics of learning environments that support the epistemological development of learners:

- Validate learners as knowers.
- Situate learning in learners' experience.
- Define learning as mutually constructing meaning.

The study of this classroom found many instances of these characteristics. Many of Linda's and Sara's beliefs about teaching and learning are variations on Baxter Magolda's assumptions. Practices observed in their work are examples of the application of the characteristics identified by Baxter Magolda. Practices that require students to set their own goals for learning, that value the knowledge and experience students bring to the classroom, that encourage students to interrogate text, to examine their own writing, to articulate their own opinions are ones that validate the students as knowers. The writing assignments for the classes in the study provide examples of situating learning in the students' experience. The "My Life" essay in Sara's class and "The Person Behind the Mask" essay for Linda's class are examples of making reflection on identity a part of the classroom experience. The teachers in the study used strategies that helped them get to know students, which in turn helped them to tailor the classroom environment and their responses to these particular students

Linda and Sara voice beliefs about the importance of challenge in teaching and learning. Baxter Magolda's assumptions about learning and characteristics do not directly address the need for challenge, although the emphasis on active construction of

knowledge implies challenge. Kegan's work (1982, 1994) and his work with Lahey (2001) talk about learning environments, or environments for adult development, that sound much like Sara's description of the risk, comfort, and panic zones. Kegan (1994) writes about a holding environment in which developing persons are held safe while they test their assumptions about the world. Sara's presentation of the target learning zone frames for both students and teachers the complementary roles of safety and challenge in learning.

Chapters 4 through 7 document multiple instances of students working together, with their teachers, and on their own to make their personal meanings. At the same time, students were using the reading and writing skills included in the defined competencies of the developmental reading and writing course. As described in the next section, sociocultural learning theory connects the acquisition of academic skills to the negotiation of identity.

Sociocultural Theory and the Focus on Activity

The lenses of the constructive developmental psychologists Kegan and Baxter Magolda allow us to look at changes in the perspectives of individual students, at students' and teachers' underlying epistemological assumptions, and at characteristics of classroom environments that support epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal learning. Sociocultural theories of identity and learning sharpen our focus on the learning environment, in particular, the culturally defined communities in which identity is negotiated and the importance of activity in identity development.

Communities of Practice and Figured Worlds

Communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and figured worlds (Holland, et al., 1998) are contexts for identity formation. For the students in the study, the context for their identity work as college students is the particular community college where the study takes place. That community college has its unique history, but it is also

influenced by the history of community colleges and higher education in the United States. The figured world of the community college, like identities, is continually evolving. As people join and leave the community, or figured world, as educational policies shift, as the population of students changes, the figured world shifts and develops, maintaining consistency with its past, but adjusting and changing in some ways, too. One of the challenges for leaders in community colleges is examining the changing and unchanging aspects of the college environment and working to be sure that the environment supports the students' learning and personal development.

Too often the voices of students go unheeded as people at colleges re-shape or resist re-shaping institutional practices. Students will need to make changes in their lives to fit in college, but if the changes they need to make require them to compromise more basic aspects of their lives, they may choose not to come to college. For example, for many of the students in this study, support of family is a deeply-felt responsibility. As long as going to college is seen as helping them to fulfill that responsibility, many will continue. However, if going to college means students cannot drop their children off at school and get to class on time, they may reconsider their choice to take classes. If the boss in the job a student needs to pay the rent insists that he work an extra half hour, and the instructor in his college class chastises him for being half an hour late to class, the student may decide enduring the humiliation of the instructor's criticism is too big a price to pay. He may stop coming to class.

One stance sometimes taken to college processes and policies is that students need to learn to deal with the college system, that providing too much flexibility means students will not learn to be responsible. This view fails to recognize that many students have competing responsibilities and commitments. If leaders, staff, and faculty want students with competing responsibilities to persist to degrees and certificates, they need to

find ways to adjust the system or marshal resources to make going to college compatible with fulfilling students' basic responsibilities.

Another aspect of the figured world of community colleges that deserves attention from college leadership, faculty, and staff is that community college worlds, shaped by historic and cultural forces, include unwritten assumptions and expectations that students may not understand. Students may not understand that the time they need to allot for study goes well beyond the 12 hours per week they spend in class. They are quite probably unaware of the resources on campus available to them. Faculty members may list their office hours on their syllabus, but without explanation the student may have no idea that the instructor has issued an open invitation to come to her office to seek help with a difficult concept or explain why he is arriving late to class. People at all levels of the community college—instructors, registrars, advisers, office administrators, student life directors, deans, vice-presidents, and presidents—must think about making the implicit assumptions and expectations explicit as a way of helping students to become active participants in the community college world. Making assumptions and expectations explicit means becoming aware of what those assumptions and expectations are.

Academic Skills and Communities of Practice

Reframing the problem of student persistence to include development of a student identity does not exclude attention to academic skills. As the students in this study demonstrate, some of the very important ways in which their perceptions shifted were in the areas of reading and writing. Learning changes what people can do; it, therefore, allows them entry into and more participation in other worlds or communities of practice. (Wenger, 1998). In the community college context, as students learn new ways of reading and writing, they can participate more fully in academic communities. As they participate more fully, their sense of self in relationship to the college community changes. They

begin, as did the students in this study, to think of themselves as college students, as learners, as critical thinkers, as readers, as writers.

This study describes students' academic learning in a way not usually measured on tests. It documents students' discovery that they are reading and enjoying reading more. It shows some students' new recognition of the power of their written voices to move others. Many of the students have begun to see their academic writing as a way of communicating their ideas, not only the completion of an assignment in order to meet the teacher's expectations and get the grade they want. Some students talked about reading as a way of helping them understand themselves and their places in the world. They were evaluating what they read and thinking about their own stances to the authors' viewpoints. Educators need to value and support these changes in students.

Some of the very important learning that happened for the students in this study went beyond academic skills. One student talked about learning to trust herself. Another talked about learning to trust others outside his family and immediate community. Many students learned that working collaboratively increased their learning and motivation to study. Some students reported understanding that learning involves asking questions of other people and of the texts that they read. These lessons are at least as important as being able to identify an author's main idea. The students report learning new ways of being in the college world.

Participation in Activity

Sociocultural learning theory also calls attention to the relationship between learning and participation in activity. Clarke (2003) defines learning as change over time through participation in activity. Instead of using the word learning, Rogoff (1995) writes about participatory appropriation. A key finding of this study is that in many cases students associated specific aspects of their learning, which they often described in terms of how

they had changed, with their participation in specific activities or kinds of activities. For example, students linked progress in their writing to working with other students, feedback from their teachers, and to the vocabulary development they gained from reading. One student linked a clearer understanding of the connection between education and his career goals to his participation in an event that brought together students and college program advisers. Many students said the experience of interviewing a professional in a career of interest to them and talking and writing about that experience made them more firmly committed to pursuing the career they investigated.

Educators can also make connections between activity and learning that students may not see or be able to articulate. For example, when students participate in discussions of literature with other students, they find out that they learn from their peers, that they contribute to the learning of others, and that authorities like teachers and textbooks are not the only sources of the knowledge valued in academic communities. Use of open-ended and student-authored questions and written reading response assignments, with less reliance on the multiple choice questions common in reading improvement textbooks, provides students with opportunities to make meaning, sending a message that they are capable creators of knowledge. Activities that call on students to set their own learning goals, to reflect on, assess and describe their own learning shifts students' attention away from grades as abstract measures of accomplishment. Students' attention is called to what they have learned and how they have changed.

Roles of Narrative and Imagination

Several theorists cite the roles of narrative and imagination in identity formation (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland, et al., 1998; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). The students in these two classrooms had multiple opportunities to talk and write about how they saw themselves in the past and present and about how they imagined their futures. The

research project investigating a career of interest and the interview of a person working in that career added detail to students' imagined futures. In one essay assignment, students wrote about their futures as if they were the present in detailed ways that fed their imaginations. Students told each other about who they were and wanted to be, saw themselves reflected as they wanted to be seen in the eyes of others, and began to act like the person they described.

Summary

The work of Kegan, Baxter Magolda, and sociocultural learning theorists provides a theoretical framework for our work as educators in community colleges, and in developmental education programs in particular. It allows us to frame our work with students in a way that is truly developmental instead of remedial. It shifts our focus from what students cannot do. Instead, we focus on creating learning environments that connect to the knowledge and experience students bring with them and provide support and company for them as they look for the answers they bring with them to our classrooms. We are able to see that creating supportive communities of learners is a necessary condition, instead of a nice extra if we happen to have time after covering course content. A sociocultural framework reminds us that we are members of communities of practice and that our students are fledgling members of those communities. With this framework, we pay attention to making the assumptions and practices of our communities explicit to students. We see ourselves as guides and mentors for new participants, whose tentative memberships in the community may develop into solid aspects of their identities.

This study provides one example of viewing practice and learning with this frame. In the final sections of this chapter, I describe in more specific terms some of the implications for practice that have been part of my learning.

Implications for Practice

Implications for High Schools

Although the main focus of this study was not students' high school experience, in the beginning of the semester interviews students talked about high school. The data reveal some implications for educational practice in high school related to relationships with school adults, experiences that foster student interests, understanding the nature of language learning, relationships with peers, and transitions to college.

Relationships and Interests

The clearest finding related to high school experience was that relationships with teachers and counselors, good and bad ones, matter a lot to the students in this study. They remembered relationships and reported them as being formative, or in the case of negative relationships, sometimes perplexing or disturbing. A few students reported negative experiences with teachers or counselors. Memorable teachers or counselors in the negative experiences failed to set limits for Michael, appeared to Roberto to be unskilled in presenting material and engaging students, or to be unable to see a Carlos' positive characteristics and desire to learn. Almost all of the students interviewed at the beginning of the semester reported some positive relationship with a teacher or counselor, some of them citing an influence that a teacher had on their decision to attend college. Memorable teachers in the positive experiences were ones who communicated care for the individual student, were passionate about their work with students, or connected students to activities that fostered their interests. Some of the students reported people and activities that kept them engaged in school and helped them develop their interests in such areas as business, leadership, police work, community work, school reform, and art. For some students, pursuing a career in the area of interest fostered in high school was a reason for attending college.

English Language Learning

Two students from the same high school appeared to me to have a limited concept of what it means to learn a second language. Their descriptions of their English proficiency were limited to oral production of language with much self-consciousness about pronouncing words correctly. Other students expressed feelings of confusion and frustration as they worked to learn English. I think that high school students could profit from understanding more about the nature of language acquisition. Students should understand that listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all part of learning English and that development in each skill supports development in the other skills. Students who understand more about the usual order of language acquisition might be more patient with themselves. Teachers should talk about the importance of being less afraid of making mistakes, the role of taking risks in learning, and of accepting and respecting peers' attempts to use English. They should work to foster environments that are less intimidating to English language learners.

Peers and Academic Engagement

Some students' reports about their high school experiences included stories of peer influence that discouraged engagement in academic work. I would like to understand more about what schools and teachers can do to foster peer relationships that enhance academic engagement. I intend to explore the research literature on the influence of high school peers on academic achievement. In the community college context, the classrooms in this study supported a peer climate that enhanced engagement and learning. Perhaps some of the recommendations for the community college classroom have applications in high school classrooms.

Need for More Research

More research on the nature of the transition from high school to college such as that called for by Harklau (2001) is needed, research that bridges the high school and college worlds. Research on how students experience the transition from high school to college can inform practice in high schools and colleges and help to ease students' transitions.

Implications for the Community College Classroom

Because of the nature of student involvement on community college commuter campuses, what happens in the classroom is of paramount importance for student learning and identity development. This study has implications for classroom practice in developmental studies classrooms and beyond.

Reading Materials and Writing Assignments

What students read and write about in their developmental reading and writing classes matters. Learners do not become better readers by reading about reading. They do not become better writers by writing about writing. They become better readers and writers when they read about ideas they want to understand and write about ideas they want to communicate. There is not one answer to the question of what students should read or write about. The guiding principle for choosing material is that it must connect to students' lives. If the connection is not immediately apparent to students, then teachers have to know their students well enough to make the connections apparent.

Students in this study came to the community college with hopes and dreams and doubts. This is true, I think, for most students in developmental studies. Subjects of vital concern to students during their first semesters at community college are ones related to identity, ones that connect their past, the present and future. Students need reading material, discussions, experiences, and writing assignments that allow them to reflect on

and answer the basic question they have about whether they belong in college. That basic question takes many forms: What kind of person am I now and who do I want to be in the future? How can education help me to be the person I want to be? What are my goals? If I choose a particular career path, what might my future look like? How do I integrate family responsibilities and cultural values with a career and a job that pays well? What is important to me? Do students like me go to college and succeed? Is it possible to integrate my current responsibilities with going to college? How will I find new friends? Is my English good enough? Can I improve my academic skills in reading, writing, and math so that I can succeed in college? Will I have any fun, joy, delight in doing this? Who can I trust? How am I expected to conduct myself as a student? How can I pay for college? Is college worth the investment in time and money? These are questions that students in this study were asking. From my experience with community college students in developmental education, many students will be asking similar variations on the basic question about whether they belong in college. Part of the developmental teacher's job is to understand what questions students are asking.

Teachers who think of writing assignments as opportunities for negotiating a college student identity will consider assignments like some Linda and Sara designed for their students. Writing assignments can be opportunities for students to create narratives about who they are and who they want to be. They can include gathering information about careers. Writing assignments are opportunities for students to articulate their opinions about issues they care about. Creative teachers can find many ways to engage students in writing about what matters to students.

Planning for Student Activity

Developmental reading and writing classroom are contexts for students to learn new ways of talking about and doing reading and writing. As they learn these new ways

they can participate more fully in academic communities and forge identities as students. Teachers know that, in addition to explaining new ways of talking about and thinking about reading and writing, they need to organize a variety of activities, or assignments, that engage students in doing reading and writing differently than they have in the past. One way to focus on what students do is to view lesson planning as the organization of student activities instead of the organization of a content presentation. Instead of asking herself the question, "What will I say?" as she plans the lesson, the teacher asks herself, "What will students do?" In the classes I observed, answering multiple choice questions was not a frequent activity. While multiple choice activities may have their place in the early stages of concept development, students must go beyond choosing someone else's formulations to articulating their own ways of talking about meaning.

Planning for Interactivity

In addition to activity, the teachers in this study paid considerable attention to interactivity, in other words, to being sure that students had multiple opportunities to interact with each other around the content of the course and issues that mattered to them. Classroom environments that foster communities of learners have multiple benefits for student learning and identity work. Students in this study learned important lessons about their own and their peers' ability to make meaning, or create knowledge. They benefited from the expertise of peers, not just the expertise of teachers. In valuing the expertise of their peers, they gained confidence in their own expertise. They were inspired by each other's work, encouraged to stay in class, and worked harder to communicate their ideas because they wanted to make themselves understood to their peers. The students sitting around them in the classroom were living evidence that students like them do indeed belong in college.

Opportunities for Reflection and Self-Assessment

Providing students opportunities to reflect upon activities and experiences gives them the opportunity to make meaning, to do the learning. We often view self-assessment activities as taking place after the fact of learning. But both cognitive developmental psychology and sociocultural theories of learning suggest that reflection is a necessary part of learning, at least in the learning that is part of negotiating identity. When learners reflect on the meaning of an activity or experience for themselves, the reflection constitutes learning. Without reflection, opportunities for learning are lost.

Reframing Teachers' Perspectives

Finally, one of the profound lessons of this study for me was shifting my own perspective away from what students could not do. When we place students in developmental classes, we are defining them by what they cannot do, by deficits, at least as measured by one computerized test, in reading, writing, and math. When we focus instead on the experience, interests, goals, hopes, and dreams that students bring with them to college, our respect for students grows. We also gather the information we need to connect the lessons we plan to the lives of students and to help them envision more fully connections between why they are in college and who they are and want to be.

Implications for Program Design

Developmental Education Programs

Conducting this study and coordinating the accelerated developmental education program in which the study took place have made me think about alternative ways of organizing developmental education programs in community colleges. These alternatives can be designed in ways that support students' development of college student identities.

Intensive, accelerated programs like the one in the study have at least three advantages for students. For some students the challenge of more intensive programs

appears to increase engagement and motivation. If students perceive developmental classes as repeats of leisurely-paced high school classes with content they have seen before, if not mastered, they may not take the work seriously. They may see their developmental classes as holding pens where they do just enough to get by until they get to the "real college classes." Another advantage of the accelerated format is that students spend more than twice as much time per week with the same students and teacher, making the development of a cohesive, mutually supportive community of learners more likely. Third, students move through the developmental course sequence in reading and writing in one semester instead of two and begin taking more transfer-level, degree-earning courses in their second semester. As students in this study said, the accelerated format helps them move closer to their goals.

Another idea that might be feasible in colleges with large numbers of students in developmental studies is to organize students with similar career interests into the same developmental courses. For example, if students interested in health careers were grouped together, reading and writing assignments could focus on issues in health care. Not only would students be building reading and writing skills, but they would be applying them in the field of study they had chosen. Some students might then be better prepared to handle the content in pre-nursing and nursing courses. Other students might realize, before they take up one of those scarce seats in nursing classes, that they want to choose another career direction.

Integrating the teaching of reading and writing has advantages for student learning. Reading and writing skills are closely related. Development in one skill enhances development in the other. Professional development for teachers teaching these integrated skills classes is important since they may not have expertise in teaching both disciplines. For students who have just one level of developmental coursework in reading and writing,

learning communities that link a developmental course in reading or writing, or both, to transfer-level degree-credit content classes, like sociology or psychology can help students apply ways of reading and writing to meaningful content.

Some colleges organize some of their developmental studies courses as individualized, self-paced modules. People who favor these options often see them as efficient, describing them as “targeted remediation.” Since observing the power of cohort learning and student interactivity, I have come to doubt the wisdom of these options, at least in reading and writing, if not in math. Unless more interaction among students is structured into these environments, the important learning and identity work described in this study is not likely to occur in these classrooms. The individualized self-paced approach, if used, should be linked in some way to more interactive formats, perhaps in another content area.

Student Services and Instruction

Student services and classroom instruction are usually organized by 2 separate groups of people at community colleges. One group of people plans student activities, clubs, and advising. Another group is responsible for classes and programs of study. Finding effective ways for these 2 groups to work together could support first-year students' as they negotiate college student identities.

Career exploration and mapping of educational pathways to careers are vital to many first-semester, first-generation student's negotiations of identity as a college student. Assistance and guidance for students with this work, when it is available at community colleges, usually comes from student services personnel and not from classroom teachers. The reality of community college students' lives frequently includes part-time or full-time jobs and some family responsibilities. Many students do not meet with advisers, or do so only in order to register for classes. These visits often take place during peak advising

times when advisers have only a short time to spend with individual students. Long conversations about goals, values, career choice, and education pathways are not likely to take place. Some students get assistance with career exploration and educational planning through special programs, which serve only a fraction of a college's students. Constraints on students' time make it imperative that student services and instructional personnel work together to design instruction, services, and processes that make career exploration and planning a part of the first-year experience of community college students. Because in many community colleges, more than half of students spend their first semester or first year taking developmental coursework, developmental classes are a good place to engage students in this vital work.

Student Life programs at community colleges struggle to engage students in clubs and campus activities. Working together, developmental faculty and student services personnel could find creative ways of integrating campus activities into classroom instruction.

Need for Professional Development

If more teachers are to create classroom environments that foster students' development of college student identities, professional development activities are needed. The design of such a program is a task for a new project and not a part of this study. However, a few principles can be drawn from this work with the teachers and students in two classrooms and from the observed history of professional development in community colleges.

From experience, community college educators know what does not work to improve classroom environments on a large scale. Two-hour workshops are not likely to bring about significant changes in teaching practice. Programs that include full-time faculty, but not part-time faculty, will not change classroom environments for the majority of

students at institutions where part-time faculty teach the overwhelming majority of developmental classes.

From my experience in working with the teachers in this study, other teachers in the small accelerated developmental studies program described in this study, and many other teachers in 15 years of work at a community college, I believe the following are promising ideas for professional development of community college full and part-time faculty. Small groups of 8-12 faculty and student services personnel organize around the desire to address a particular problem of practice. Group members meet regularly to discuss and question their beliefs about teaching and learning as they relate to the identified problem and examine their practice in light of those beliefs. They read about, discuss, and experiment with approaches to the problem. They examine student work to evaluate new practices. They consider student voices as they develop curriculum, plan activities, and evaluate their work with students. They observe each other's classes and interactions with students and learn from each other.

Effective teacher professional development should follow the same principles for professional learning environments that Baxter Magolda (2001) recommends for college students. The learning must be situated in the teacher's experience. It should engage teachers in the socially negotiated construction of knowledge about their professional practice.

Many community college educators from presidents to part-time faculty are beginning to understand the vital importance of professional development for full and part-time faculty to the improvement of student learning and student persistence to degrees and certificates. Fiscal priorities and funding realities mitigate against allocating resources to professional development activities. Many underpaid part-time faculty and over-burdened full-time college personnel will be reluctant to commit time and effort to professional

development. The obstacles to professional development that would transform the classroom experiences of large numbers of community college students are indeed great.

Some of the greatest of these obstacles are the conditions in which part-time faculty work. Unable to make ends meet by teaching at one college, many part-time faculty rush from class to class, from one school to another. They may not be able to afford extra time in professional development activities. They may not be inclined to participate in improving the work of an institution that does not appear to value their work enough to pay them better, give them benefits, job security, or office space. Negotiating these obstacles will require creativity, more resources, and fundamental policy changes.

On the other hand, I believe that, unless a much higher percentage of students in community college developmental education programs experience classroom environments that support their developing identities of as college students, we are unlikely to see much improvement in student persistence to degrees and certificates. We need to give students the opportunity to answer the burning question of whether college will help them reach their goals. They need to have this opportunity in their first year. Otherwise, there is a chance they will not be back.

APPENDIX A. STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.

First-Year Developmental Students Study Interview Protocol

Prepare before interview:

- 10 5" x 7" index cards, each with one of the following prompts written on it: anger, anxious or nervous, success, standing up for your beliefs, sad, confused, moved/touched, lost something, change, important to me
- a digital recorder with memory for 90-minutes of data
- pen for student interviewee
- pen and notepad for myself

Explanation of interview to student:

"This interview will take between 1 and 1 ½ hours. The goal of the interview is to learn how you think about your learning experiences in the past, present, or future. I want to understand how you understand your own experiences. You have control of what you want to talk about. You don't need to talk about anything you don't want to talk about."

Reflection time with cards:

- Give the students the 10 cards described above. Say, "These cards are for you to look at and write on. You can take them with you and keep them or throw them away after the interview. The purpose of the cards is to give you a chance to think about and jot down ideas about what you might want to talk about in the interview. Look at the cards and think of times when you have felt these emotions related to learning or school. I'd like you to spend about 15-20 minutes looking at the cards and writing notes to yourself about experiences you might want to talk about. You don't need to write on all the cards, just on the ones that make you think of an idea or an experience you'd like to talk about. We won't have time to talk about all the cards. You'll decide which ones you want to talk about. [The interviewer takes time to introduce each card. Two examples follow.] "For example, if you want to think about the success card, think back to a time in school or when you were learning something new when you felt success and make some notes on the card about that experience of success. As another example, with the change card, think back on your past experiences of school and learning, and think about how you've changed in the last few years or months, even. Are there ways you've changed that come to mind? Make some notes on the card."
- Allow 15-20 minutes for the student to make notes on cards.

Initiating the interview:

"Are you ready to start? In the next hour or so we can talk about some of the experiences you've made notes about. Are there a couple of cards you feel more strongly about or that you'd like to talk about more than the others? Look through the cards and choose one that you'd like to talk about. You've chosen the _____ card? Tell me about a time when you felt _____ in a situation related to school or learning."

During the interview:

Try to balance two roles—that of active, sympathetic listener and that of active inquirer. An interview manual describes ways of indicating active listening and ways of questioning that elicit clearer articulation of ideas from students. As an active listener, let the interviewee know that you understand and empathize.

Examples of ways of indicating sympathetic listening:

- Rephrase what you've heard: "So when the teacher responded that way to your work, you were mad." "So you could feel really proud after you did that."
- Express empathy: "That's too bad." "What a wonderful experience!"

As an inquirer, use questions intended to lead the interviewee to articulate the extent to which he/she is able to examine and reflect on his/her experience and the extent to which he/she sees himself/herself in control of and responsible for his/her decisions as students or learners.

Examples of ways of leading the student to a clearer articulation:

- Ask why: "I'd like to understand how you felt about that experience a little better. Can you tell me why . . .?"
- Ask what might have changed the way the interviewee felt in that situation.
- Find out the extremes: "What was it about that experience that made you most proud?"
- Ask how the student knows something: "How did you know that the teacher didn't care about students?"
- Ask what would be an important outcome for the student: "What is most important to you about getting your degree?"

When you and the student have exhausted the ideas on one card, ask the student to choose a second card to talk about.

Ending the interview:

The interview ends when the time is up, talk about a card has been exhausted, or the student doesn't want to talk anymore. Explain that you will transcribe the interview and then study the transcript along with transcripts from other students' interviews to understand better the perspectives of students. Thank the student for his/her time.

Reference

Lahey, L., Souvaine, E., Kegan, R., Goodman, R., & Felix, S. (1988). *A guide to the subject-object interview: Its administration and interpretation*. Unpublished manuscript.

APPENDIX B. EXCERPT FROM NVIVO CODING

Table B.1 Excerpt from the tree of codes classified under first-level code “Activities and Assignments”

Secondary Code	Tertiary Code	Sources	References
advising fair		3	6
career workshops		3	3
discussion		2	2
group activities		14	22
homework		4	7
labs		3	5
S's games		4	6
reading		8	15
	<i>active reading</i>	2	2
	<i>audience</i>	1	1
	<i>like-dislike</i>	2	2
	<i>main idea, implied, stated</i>	3	4
	<i>reading critically</i>	3	5
	<i>reading more</i>	3	5
	<i>SQ3R</i>	3	3
	<i>textbooks</i>	3	4
	<i>Tuesdays with Morrie</i>	3	3
	<i>vocabulary</i>	2	3
religion		1	1
ropes course		5	6
taking tests		3	4
writing		12	20
	<i>6 traits</i>	2	2
	<i>attention to meaning, clarity</i>	1	1
	<i>"Back to the Future"</i>	2	2
	<i>confidence</i>	1	1
	<i>interviews</i>	4	7
	<i>Career research paper</i>	8	8
	<i>problems</i>	1	2
	<i>process, habits</i>	4	8
	<i>rubrics</i>	2	3
	<i>spelling</i>	2	2
	<i>teacher's comments</i>	5	5
	<i>workshop</i>	3	3

Sources = Number of formal interviews in which the code was used

Reference = Number of references in the interviews which use the cod

APPENDIX C. FIRST DAY IN SARA'S CLASS

Students are sitting in individual desks arranged in 7 rows with 5 desks in each row. Sara is standing at the board to the right of a table that holds a document camera, her books and papers. Before class some of the students are talking in small groups because they know each other from high school. Others talk to no one and look straight ahead.

After preliminaries that include course title and section, asking students to turn off cell phones, and calling their attention to the list of topics/activities for the session, Sara launches an explanation of the target zone. She asks students to write a few sentences on a piece of paper about an experience from which they learned a lot. While the students are writing, Sara walks around, talking to each student, checking names against her list of enrolled students, taking time to greet each student individually. Students are then asked to tell another student about the experience they wrote about. Students pair off quickly and easily. Several of them shake hands with their partners as they introduce themselves. Some pairs finish the assigned task very quickly and fall silent, but then make tentative conversation, asking each other questions about where they went to high school.

Sara asks if any students want to share their learning experiences with the whole group. Three students volunteer answers, which include "learning my ABC's", the first day of elementary school, and the first time away from the family. None of them elaborate much on the experiences, and other students are quiet.

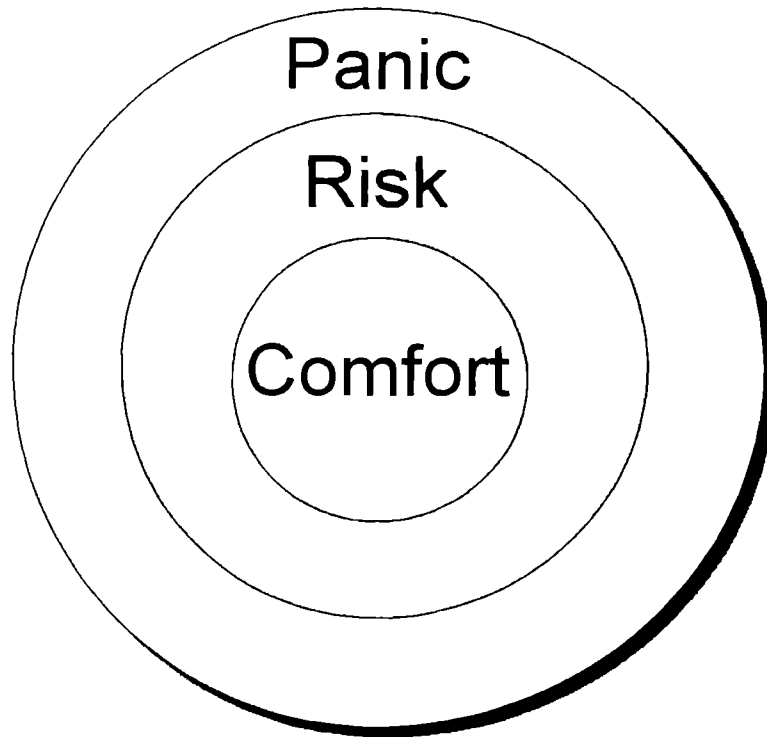


Figure C.1 Learning Target Zone

Sara then calls students' attention to the diagram on the board: 3 concentric circles, the outermost labeled "comfort", the second, "risk" and the innermost, "panic." (See Figure D.1) Sara explains that the 3 circles represent zones, and asks students when they learn the most, when they are in the comfort zone, the risk zone, or the panic zone. Most students say they learn in the panic zone. Sara says that is what her students usually tell her, but that she thinks it is very difficult for people to learn when they are panicked. People remember those experiences because they are so intense, but the main concern when people panicked is survival, not learning. She continues,

If we're in the comfort zone, we don't learn much either. We feel like we know what we're doing, and we don't have to work very hard. But in the risk zone, we learn the most. We're not so comfortable that we don't have to put out much effort, and we're not panicked and worried about our survival. We need to be in this target zone, the risk zone. We need to understand that we need risk, or challenge, to learn. What we need to do is move out of the panic zone, get comfortable, and then move into the risk zone. My job as the teacher is to keep you in the risk zone during this semester, and your job as the student is to tell me if you're not being challenged or if you're feeling panicked.

To deepen students' grasp of this concept, Sara asks students to participate in an activity that gets them out of their desks and moving about the room. She designates three areas of the classroom as the panic, risk, or comfort zone. When she calls out a prompt, she asks students to move to the area of the room that shows best how they feel about the prompt. She calls out "snake," and then asks what might help students who have put themselves in the panic zone to move into the comfort zone. Students suggest learning more about snakes. When she calls out "public speaking" next, all but 4 students move to the panic zone. The 4 other students move to the risk zone. When asked what might help move students to the comfort zone, students suggest "getting to know each other" and "talking". Sara takes this opportunity to mention that she did not want to do all the talking in the class, that it is important for them to talk to each other, and expresses the hope that within a couple of weeks they will feel comfortable talking to each other. The activity continues with a few more prompts, some from Sara, some from the students, some academic in nature, some not.

Discussion of the syllabus takes about 10 minutes of class time. Sara calls students' attention to the attendance policy and a list of expectations, which includes the expectation that students will participate in class activities and discussions, organize assignments into the portfolio, and turn them in on the assigned dates. The course outline provides space for students to write the homework assignments for each day. The kinds of assignments—reading responses, homework assignments, essays, quizzes, and

attendance, participation, and work in the computer lab—are described briefly, along with the percentage of the final grade for each kind of assignment. Students ask few questions. One student asks about what supplies are needed for class. Sara replies that students need paper, pen, a folder for the portfolio, and the textbooks.

In the next activity, Sara introduces students to a pattern that she will follow regularly at the beginning of class sessions throughout the semester. She asks students to participate in an activity, the point of which is not immediately apparent. Following the activity, students talk about what they learned from the activity. This activity provides students with a chance to get to know each other.

Sara directs students to choose partners with whom they have not yet spoken for this “challenge game.” Students have 5-10 minutes to “get to know each other”, but they are not allowed to talk or write to each other. They can use paper for drawing. Afterwards, they will be asked to introduce their partners to the class, when speaking will be allowed. During the game, most students are laughing and smiling. A few students seem uncomfortable, looking down at their papers, or squirming in their chairs. Sara offers words of encouragement, assuring them that if they mess up and get the wrong information, their partner will be there to help them. After the students spend about 10 minutes trying to communicate with each other, Sara asks them if they found the introductions challenging. Students confirm that yes, communicating was a challenge, because they could not talk. Students talk about how they communicated with drawings, gestures, and nods to confirm if the other student had understood. Students then proceed to introduce each other. Their partners confirm or clarify what the other student understood. Sara and other students ask questions to find out a little more about each student. Most students introduce themselves with their names, ages, and where they went to high school. A few students let others in on

the number of siblings they have, and in the case of the students with children, 2 of the women in the class, the age and sex of their child.

Students have been in class for almost 1 ½ hours, and they are beginning to look more relaxed, smiling more and making eye contact with each other. After a 10-minute break, students return at the time Sara requested. Sara launches into a lesson on reading with the question, "Have you ever heard about inner voice in your reading? No? Good, so this is new." After free-writing about what they think "inner voice" means, students contribute their ideas as Sara writes their ideas on the whiteboard. The shared explanation of inner voice as it related to reading is in one student's words, "what you're thinking while you're reading," and in Sara's words, "inner dialogue, what you're telling yourself." Sara, then leads a combination lecture/discussion, in which she writes on a paper that was projected onto a screen by the document camera.

By way of the discussion about inner voice, Sara leads the class to an understanding of what is expected of them in reading response assignments. Sara summarizes the discussion and relates the diagram and the concept of inner voice to reading response assignments, a kind of assignment that students will do regularly throughout the semester, usually as homework. On this first day of class, students start the reading response assignment in class so that Sara can guide them through it and model how these assignments can be completed independently in the future.

Sara hands out an article that describes a day on which mountain climber Eric Weihenmeyer, who was the first blind climber to reach the top of Mount Everest, guided his father in a technical climb up the side of a mountain (Walker, 1999). Weihenmeyer's blindness is not revealed until the end of the article. Sara asks the students to read the article, while paying attention to their inner voice:

After you finish reading, you'll choose one or more of the inner voices, but not all 5, to use in your response to the reading. Notice again, that the response is not a summary. Instead, it answers some of the questions you answer in the inner dialogue you've had with yourself while reading. We're going to practice. Skim the article in less than 2 minutes. Write at the top of the article what you think the article is about.

After just 2 minutes, several students give ideas about what they think the article is about. One of the students, Dave, has read a book by Eric Weihenmeyer, but Sara asks him not to say what he knows about the climber until the rest of the class had finished the article. After this short discussion about student predictions, Sara directs the students to read the article and begin writing their responses.

After 10 minutes, most of the students have begun writing their responses. While the students are writing, Sara circulates, checking with a few students to be sure they understand what to do, telling the whole group that at this point in their writing they should not worry about grammar or punctuation. After students have worked for about 20 minutes, Sara tells them they can finish their written response as homework and that it should be turned in with their first portfolio of work in two weeks.

Students then divide into groups of 3 to talk about their responses to the article. The group that I can overhear begins their discussion by asking each other what they chose to write about. Two of the students are reluctant to speak, and the third student Eddie, tries to draw them out. The conversation stops rather quickly, but other groups are more animated. After about 4 minutes, the conversations are winding down, and Sara draws the class together by asking, "How many of you knew he was blind before you started reading?" Only Dave, who has done some climbing, and has read a book by Weihenmeyer, knew. Students describe the article as "shocking" and "inspiring." Sara takes the opportunity to let students know that she is a climber and has watched Weihenmeyer climb. In addition to clarifying that students should finish their reflections and

submit them with the first portfolio assignment, she hands out an additional short reading about Weihenmeyer.

As the class wraps up, Sara collects information sheets from each student with names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. The sheet also includes an open-ended question: "What should I know about you as a student?" Students take home a Reading/Writing Survey to complete and bring back to the next session which gives them the opportunity to answer questions about their attitudes and experience with reading and writing and their expectations for the class. Using the document camera, Sara models how students can write their homework assignments in spaces provided on the course outline and schedule in the syllabus. As students leave the class, several stop to talk to Sara, asking questions, making contact. Some leave alone without talking to anyone. Others leave in pairs or threes, talking and smiling.

APPENDIX D. FIRST DAY IN LINDA'S CLASS.

When I arrive, students are sitting at tables facing each other, rather than forward facing the teacher. Linda stands behind another table. Her name with the title Dr. is written on the board. She asks students how they think her name is pronounced and uses the pronunciation problem as an opportunity to make the point that they should give it a try. Linda emphasizes that not getting it right is not a problem.

For the first activity, Linda asks students to pretend they are at a cocktail party, without the drinks. The purpose of the activity is for them to get to know each other, to "make friends". Linda comments,

You'll be working with other students in the class a lot. Start thinking about who you would like to work with. Find out each person's name and something interesting about each person. Be sure to move around and talk to everyone. Everyone on their feet!

For 20 minutes, the room is abuzz with conversation. I see a lot of smiles, some nervousness. Students take some notes. This is great opportunity for me to walk around and get acquainted with students. I explain that I'm doing research and will be in the class regularly throughout the semester. I ask when and where students finished high school, why they are interested in FastStart, ideas about major. I ask each student to tell me something interesting about himself or herself.

The group spends another 15 minutes with students introducing one of the people in the class, until all students are introduced.

Students have the opportunity to question Linda about herself. She asks what they would like to know about her. She reserves the right to choose whether or not to answer the questions. In this process, Linda tells students something of her biography. She was born in the Philippines, studied accounting, married and moved to Thailand where she was

able to get a job teaching English. There she discovered that she loved teaching and understood that teaching is what God wants her to do. After she mentions God, a student asks her if she is religious. She responds by saying that she prefers to talk about spirituality, rather than religion, and that she sees herself as God's instrument.

I'm busy writing, uncomfortable with open talk about faith in God. I'm not watching students' faces, but I hear one student say, "Oh!" expressing surprise. Another student asks what she expects of them, the students. She expects them to learn a lot, to cooperate with each other, not to compete with each other, and to be honest if she says anything that offends them, so that they can resolve conflicts. She emphasizes the importance of a good relationship between students and teacher for the students' learning. Further she says, "I expect you to be positive, not to quit easily, not to give up." Linda tells a story of her daughter, who kept changing her goals. She uses an analogy, talking about the problem of getting halfway up a mountain, and then deciding you want to climb another mountain. "Pick one mountain," Linda advises, "and go all the way to the top." She refers to the movie *Pay It Forward*, and says, "We're in the world to do good, and not to expect anything in return."

Next, Linda allows time for the reading of the syllabus. She tells a story about her own problem of avoiding finishing work in her Master's and doctoral programs. What worked for her was to set deadlines for herself and set up schedules. She gives information on a few other items in the syllabus. In response to a student question about teacher contact information, Linda mentions the use of e-mail as a good way to get in touch with her outside of class. She mentions her availability to work with individual students outside of class and in the ½ hour before each class session starts.

The next exercise is a sentence completion exercise. Linda writes the sentence starters on the board. Her directions to students are to finish each of the sentences. "Write

what come into your head," she directs. "Just keep writing quickly. Write 10 completions of each sentence. (See Table A2.1 above for the sentence starters.) While students are writing responses to the sentence starter, Linda circulates, talking to students if they are having trouble, encouraging them to write without second-guessing their thinking. She collects the papers, telling students their responses will be used as a basis of discussion in the next class period.

Table D.1 Sentence starters

Sentence Starters about College
College is
Being a college student means
I am in college because
My greatest concerns are

Finally, students have ½ an hour to write on a prompt as prescribed by the developmental English department to double-check their placement in the class.

On the next page is a sampling of student concerns compiled from the Sentence Starters about College. These were discussed in small groups and with the whole class on the second day of class.

Table D.2**Concerns about college**

My greatest worry about college is
Academic Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not understanding something• Not keeping up with the rest of the class• Having to leave this class because of my grades• My grades• Passing exams, quizzes, homework in order to make progress in my college career• Not passing• Falling behind
Financial concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paying rent• Money to pay for classes
Persistence, effort
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving up in the middle of the semester• I'll quit• Self-discipline• I won't get everything I should from college
Workload, other commitments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My children/my family• Time to study despite work commitments• The volume of work we will have
Relevance, meaningfulness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not getting anything out of this

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